

A heat wave is coming to Maryland. Here's how experts say to keep cool.

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore has declared a state of preparedness



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PUBLISHED: June 30, 2026 at 12:16 PM EDT | UPDATED: June 30, 2026 at 6:10 PM EDT

The City of Baltimore has declared a Code Red extreme heat alert from Wednesday through the Fourth of July, and Gov. Wes Moore called for a state of preparedness as a prolonged heat wave is set to bring dangerous conditions across the eastern United States this week.

The [National Weather Service](#) forecast temperatures rising from the 90s to the low 100s through the weekend, with high humidity pushing the heat index as high as 115 degrees in the state.

If it feels like a pressure cooker, that's no coincidence, FOX45 meteorologist Gerard Jebaily said.

"We have a ridge of high pressure coming in, which I like to call a high-pressure heat machine," Jebaily told The Baltimore Sun. "It's something like what a pressure cooker in your home does. The pressure squeezes the hot air, which heats it up more than usual."

These conditions make health problems more likely, he said. Even young, otherwise healthy people can see symptoms of heat illness in as little as 30 minutes of exposure.

"People don't realize how quickly heat illness can set in," Jebaily said. "Heat is the No. 1 killer of all weather phenomena. It kills more people than hurricanes, tornadoes and flooding combined."

How can you protect yourself?

“The best way to treat any heat-related illness is to prevent it altogether,” Dr. Cheyenne Falat, assistant medical director of the Adult Emergency Department at the University of Maryland Medical Center, told The Sun.

It’s important to be able to recognize symptoms, Falat said. “Mild heat illness might look like — your feet get swollen, you feel light-headed or get a prickly heat rash under your clothes from sweating.”

If you don’t cool down, Falat said, heat exhaustion could set in. Signs of distress include lightheadedness or dizziness, nausea, dehydration and feeling a need to sit down.

At that stage it’s important to get out of the sun, find shelter, ideally with air conditioning, hydrate with electrolytes or water, she said, but not alcohol, coffee or tea as those can further dehydrate you.

Ignoring those symptoms increases the risk of heatstroke and death, she said. Confusion and loss of fine motor skills can be followed quickly by tissue and organ damage as a body temperature topping 104 degrees Fahrenheit causes brain and liver damage first, then cascading effects on every other internal organ, Falat said.

It’s time to dial 911, and if possible, get the person into an ice bath, or at least a TACO. That stands for tarp-assisted cooling with oscillation, Falat said, or wrapping the affected person in a tarp, sheet or blanket and soaking them with any cool, cold or iced liquid, beverage, “even harbor water, if that’s all that’s on hand.”

The hottest Fourth of July on record for Baltimore was 100 degrees in 2002, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data, though the city recorded a heat wave of 103 degrees on July 1 and 2, 1901. The highest the mercury officially climbed in Charm City was July 10, 1936, when NOAA reported temperatures up to 107.

With record heat comes record electric usage.

PJM Interconnection, which operates the 13-state electric grid including Maryland, [projects demand will exceed 166,000](#) megawatts and could surpass the record of 165,563 megawatts set in 2006. On Saturday, PJM [asked the U.S. Department of Energy](#) to require data centers and other large customers to fire up their backup generators during the heat wave, freeing up power for residential needs.

“PJM may need to rely upon this emergency authorization during the upcoming forecasted hot weather conditions,” PJM senior vice president of operations Michael E. Bryson wrote in the filing.

BGE told The Sun they are closely monitoring the high heat this week to respond to higher projected energy demand and potential brownouts.

“Our continued upgrades have prepared the electric system for extreme weather, but outages can still occur when the grid is strained,” a spokesperson wrote in an emailed statement.

Heat waves bring serious consequences for pregnant women, people on certain medications and those using illegal drugs, experts say.

Heat and substance abuse seem to go hand-in-hand, said PhD student D.J. Carter, who leads community engagement for the Baltimore Social-Environmental Collaborative at Morgan State University. “The Penn North mass overdose was during a heat wave.”

On July 10, 2025, [35 people overdosed](#) on fentanyl, possibly laced with tranquilizers, in Penn North. Some did not respond normally to the rescue drug naloxone, health officials said, resulting in a mass-casualty event.

Some illegal and prescription drugs can increase body temperature, [an October study](#) by Yale School of Medicine and Yale School of Public Health found. Fentanyl and opioids cause disorientation and suppress breathing, limiting the body’s ability to cool down and the instinct to seek shelter. Studies show recreational drug use as well as first-time use increase during summer months.

In addition, Falat said many party drugs such as X, MDMA, PCP and Molly increase the body’s metabolism and can hasten heat-related illnesses.

It’s important to know the side effects of prescription and over-the-counter medications, she said. Anything that includes disorientation or dehydration as a possible side effect increases the dangers of heat exposure. Many heart disease medications alter the heart’s function, heart rate, or blood pressure in ways that can complicate its ability to adapt to heat.

As little as one day of exposure to high temperatures and poor air quality can harm a pregnancy, according to the National Institutes of Health. Children, infants and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to heat-related health risks. Pregnant women should pay close attention to the heat risk and air quality forecasts and take measures to protect themselves and their baby, the NIH advises.

“Maternal heat exposure is associated with ... preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, hypertension, and increased hospital admissions,” a 2025 article in the [Journal of Clinical Medicine](#) found. “Additionally, prenatal heat stress correlates with preterm birth, low birth weight, birth defects, and stillbirth.”

Air pollution complicates threats from heat.

Neighborhoods near data centers or large facilities could face higher air pollution from diesel or natural gas backup generators.

“Increases in air pollution can have disastrous effects on people’s health,” Falat said, “especially people with chronic airway conditions.”

The combination of heat, humidity, potential increases in pollution and strains on the electric grid means staying home and cranking the air conditioning could backfire, especially if the grid becomes overwhelmed and outages or brownouts occur.

“You may want to go to public places if your health allows. Go to the mall. If you work from home, go to Starbucks,” Falat said.

City-designated cooling centers and public libraries are also good options to beat the heat without straining the electric grid.

In addition to setting the thermostat higher during the middle of the day, BGE recommends grilling outdoors and waiting until late evening to use high-energy appliances such as ovens, dryers and dishwashers.

If you experience an outage, you can report it in any of the following ways:

- Online, at BGE.com
- BGE’s free mobile app, available at the Apple Store or Google Play
- Text message to 69243
- Phone 877.778.2222
- To report gas odors, call 911 or 877.778.7798 and leave the area quickly.

These reporting services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To sign up for email and text notifications, visit BGE.com/alerts.

Have a news tip? Contact Karl Hille at 443-900-7891 or khille@baltsun.com.