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2007 Keep Cool Illinois Campaign to help families stay safe, healthy and cool this summer

Blagojevich Administration Officials Launch 2007 Keep Cool Illinois Campaign to help families stay safe, healthy and cool this summer \$6 million available this summer for energy assistance program; Multiple State Agencies, and the National Weather Service work together to prevent heat-related health problems, reduce utility bills and promote safe summer fun

CHICAGO - Blagojevich Administration officials launched the 2007 Keep Cool Illinois campaign and Web site today to help families stay cool, healthy and safe this summer. A comprehensive, statewide effort, Keep Cool Illinois, seeks again this year to inform Illinois residents, especially the elderly, families with small children and persons with disabilities, how to prevent heat-related health problems, reduce their utility bills and participate in summer activities safely. Also, as part of the campaign, low income residents can apply for assistance with their summer energy bills starting July 9.

"Summers in Illinois can be very hot and humid. The high temperatures can really put a strain on people's health and their pocketbooks," Gov. Blagojevich said. "Through the Keep Cool Illinois campaign, we are trying to help as many people as we can save energy, save money and stay cool this summer."

The Keep Cool Illinois campaign includes the www.keepcool.illinois.gov Web site, a statewide network of cooling centers, targeted outreach to vulnerable senior citizens, energy assistance programs, public service announcements, fire safety, water safety and other tips to help families across Illinois prepare for the summer.

The statewide, multi-agency and group campaign involves the Illinois Departments on Aging (IDoA), Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), Human Services (IDHS), Public Health (IDPH), the Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), and the Lt. Governor's Office.

Energy Assistance Grants: The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) will launch its Summer Cooling program on July 9. The program has the ability to distribute up to \$6 million in Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) funds to low-income families to assist them with their utility bills, so they can keep their air conditioners and fans running. Through

LIHEAP, a state- and federally-funded energy assistance program, utility bill payments are made on behalf of households with incomes of up to 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

"We all have a responsibility to do whatever we can to help Illinois families make it through the hot summer months ahead, especially our most vulnerable families," said Barry Maram, Director of HFS. "With this comprehensive initiative, we hope to assist more families than ever before. I would urge all Illinoisans who believe they may be eligible to look into available state resources and the LIHEAP program before the hot weather arrives."

Energy Efficiency Information: The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) provides information and technical assistance for people looking for ways to improve their energy efficiency at home or on the job. Many energy efficiency options, such as improved air sealing, insulation and the use of Energy Star appliances, help reduce energy use year round. DCEO will provide information on easy ways to save money and on available grant programs to help reduce energy costs. Weatherization tips will also soon be available via streaming video from the Keep Cool Web site and the DCEO Web site at www.illinoisenergy.org.

The Keep Cool Illinois Web site: www.keepcool.illinois.gov offers various no-cost and low-cost energy saving tips, links to cooling centers and energy assistance programs, firework safety tips, West Nile virus prevention guides and other available state resources. The Keep Cool Illinois hotline (877-411-9276) as well a Spanish version of the Web site provide additional resources for Illinois residents to learn how to cut utility bills, receive energy assistance and stay cool and healthy this summer.

Keep Cooling Centers: As part of his Keep Cool Illinois campaign, Gov. Blagojevich is making 130 state facilities available as cooling centers beginning today. The cooling centers will provide Illinoisans a place to stay cool and comfortable during the scorching hot days of summer. The cooling centers are located at Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) offices throughout the state and will be open to the public during regular business hours so anyone seeking refuge from the heat has a cool place to go when the temperature climbs. More information on the state's cooling centers will be available by calling the IDHS toll-free hotline (800-843-6154) or you can search by zip code for the cooling center nearest you at www.keepcool.illinois.gov.

"The cooling centers offer a cool place for Illinoisans to beat the heat this summer," said IDHS Secretary Carol L. Adams, Ph.D. "Many low-income Illinoisans have no air conditioning in their homes or no other cool place to go to escape the heat. The cooling centers offer a clean, safe place to take refuge during the hottest part of the day."

Senior Summer Safety: The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) will provide Summer Tips to seniors statewide through its network of Area Agencies on Aging. The agency, working with its partners in the Aging Network, will also work to educate and provide materials outlining dangers associated with the summer weather, perform well-being checks on vulnerable seniors, provide cooling centers at senior centers, adult day service centers and nutrition sites as well as extend hours and provide transportation as requested.

Seniors are at an increased risk especially if they take certain medications, drink alcohol, lack proper nutrition or who have conditions such as arthritis, stroke, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. During heat emergencies, seniors are urged to contact their local Area Agencies on Aging or the Senior HelpLine (800-252-8966) for assistance with locating senior centers, adult day service sites and other familiar buildings that serve as cooling centers.

"The Keep Cool Illinois campaign will help older people learn how they can take the right steps to avoid heat stress, and I urge all seniors to take the time to review these potential life-saving tips," Department on Aging Director Charles D. Johnson said. "Most of us often fail to recognize that extreme heat and humidity can pose very dangerous threats, particularly as we age."

FAN Club Program: The Lieutenant Governor's Office, with funding assistance from HFS, will kick-off the FAN Club again this summer. Started in 2005, the program has distributed about 1,000 fans through the Illinois Community Action Association to low-income households across Illinois.

Dehydration and Heat Stroke Prevention: The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) will provide information to Illinoisans on how to prevent and treat dehydration, which can occur from not drinking enough fluids, and heat stroke, which can be caused from overexposure to direct sunlight, with or without physical activity, or to very high indoor temperatures.

Water Safety: IDPH will also provide information to Illinoisans on how to decrease the health and safety risks associated with swimming. IDPH requires the state's 3,500 swimming pools and spas meet water quality and safety standards. IDPH enforces these rules and regulations through plan approvals and inspections. To prevent illnesses associated with swimming at Illinois beaches, each licensed beach is inspected annually to determine that required safety features are in place and there are no sources of possible pollution such as sewage discharges. IDPH also requires that each of the 408 licensed public beaches (excluding beaches on Lake Michigan, which are monitored daily by the counties and municipalities) be sampled every two weeks to determine that bacterial levels in the water are within established limits.) For more information on summer activity safety and summer health risks, please call IDPH at 217-782-4977 or visit <http://www.idph.state.il.us/public/books/summtoc.htm> to find the "Summer? No Sweat" Survival Guide published and distributed by IDPH.

West Nile Virus Prevention: IDPH will also urge Illinoisans to take precautions to prevent disease and injury while they "keep cool" this summer. As part of the Governor's Keep Cool Illinois campaign, IDPH will continue to provide helpful tips to prevent West Nile. The West Nile Virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Most people with the virus have no clinical symptoms of illness, but some may become ill three to 14 days after the bite of an infected mosquito.

Illinois Energy Efficient Affordable Housing Construction Program: DCEO has grants available to non-profit housing developers that include energy efficient building practices in the rehab or construction of affordable housing units. These building practices often bring energy savings between 50 percent and 75 percent.

Lightning Safety Awareness: Each year in the United States, an average of 67 people are killed by lightning - more than those killed by tornadoes. Most lightning fatalities and injuries occur outdoors at recreational events (baseball games, soccer games, lakes and on golf courses) and under or near trees. Under the Governor's Keep Cool Illinois campaign, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) will join with the National Weather Service (NWS) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to help residents understand how to stay safe when lightning strikes. A lightning safety awareness booklet is available on the IEMA Web site (www.state.il.us/iema) and an outdoor safety tips brochure will be available at all state park visitors' centers this summer.

Fireworks safety: While fireworks are a traditional part of Fourth of July celebrations, many people are seriously injured each year by careless or untrained use of fireworks. New state

fireworks regulations that went into effect last year helped decrease the number of fireworks-related injuries by ensuring that fireworks are only used by people who meet safety standards. The Office of the State Fire Marshal has information about the fireworks regulations and other fireworks safety tips on their Web site at www.state.il.us/osfm.

Air Pollution Action Days: The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) and the Partners for Clean air throughout the hot summer months will continue to alert the public on Air Pollution Action Days, when air pollution increases due to heat and sun. Daily reports of air quality measurements are provided to the media in order to notify the public that levels of air pollution pose a health risk, especially for those with respiratory or heart illnesses. These notices alert individuals in Chicago, northwest Indiana, and Metro East that low winds and high temperatures have the potential to elevate pollution to unhealthy levels. The goal is to encourage individuals and businesses to take actions to reduce pollution as well as alert the public. More information can be found at: www.cleantheair.org, and for more green tips visit the IEPA online at: www.epa.state.il.us.

"There are 'green actions' individuals can take to reduce air pollution. Some of those actions are as simple as limiting driving and opting to walk or ride a bike, and using E85 in your flexible fuel vehicle," said IEPA Director Doug Scott. "By following these small steps, each citizen will be able to collectively reduce emissions and enjoy the great outdoors Illinois has to offer."

Gov. Blagojevich launched the Keep Warm Illinois campaign and Web site in the fall of 2005 to help all Illinoisans stay warm, healthy and safe throughout the winter. The Keep Warm Illinois campaign was also a comprehensive effort to inform and prepare Illinois residents for record high home heating costs. It included unprecedented coordination between state agencies as well as a statewide public awareness effort in partnership with community colleges and Clear Channel Radio in Chicago to help inform Illinoisans about winter preparations and resources available.

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