



pennsylvania
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY



MONTHLY
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Ask A Ranger

Exploring the beautiful, vast Pennsylvania outdoors can be fun and memorable. However, the most important part of any trip is staying safe. Join us as we have a conversation with Bureau of State Parks Assistant Director Ryan Dysinger.

I am planning a trip for my family to a state park. What should I do before going?

Always research the park online prior to your trip. It is important to layout your trip, including where you are going and if it is a multiday trip, how far you will travel each day and how long you plan to stay in each area. Plan enough time for day trips to prevent you from traveling after dark without proper nighttime equipment. Always tell someone where you are going and expected time of return. Write down your plans and indicate on a map where you are going. Let them know that you will call when you return. Leave a copy of your plan in your vehicle too. Check the park advisories, the weather and ALWAYS check [PA511](#).

Once I get to the state park, what should I know and what should I do to stay safe? Always make sure you have enough water for your trip. **Extra water is better than not enough water!** You should be aware of exit roads. Look for park staff to assist you in a time of need. Make sure you are prepared for your trip and know the daily weather conditions you could face. Dress properly including layers of clothing and **especially proper footwear** for your specific activity. Long-sleeved shirts and pants are an easy way to protect your skin against bugs, like mosquitos and ticks, as well as scratches from thorny plants and tree branches. Proper footwear, like boots and sneakers, give the best footing while hiking. Sandals and flip-flops are **not** hiking friendly. According to park managers at Ricketts Glen State Park, flip-flops were responsible for many of the carry-out injuries on the park's popular Falls Trail. Check park kiosks for local information pertinent to the park including emergency contact information and hospital directions. Take a picture of it on your phone or jot down the phone numbers before you head out on the trail. Carry a small first aid kit in your hiking pack and keep a larger one in your car or at the campsite. Carry a flashlight or headlamp – even on a day hike. If you have trouble on the trail, darkness may fall before you can finish your hike. Remember, you can lose phone service. Do not rely on your cellphone; take a paper map with you. Cellphones and GPS Units are not reliable in remote areas. A compass is also a helpful tool that is a perfect companion to your map. You can look at a map and talk to folks all day. But when the rubber meets the road and you have to make decisions, you have to be willing to turn around. You are more likely to make a poor judgment call—ignoring signs your body needs a break, pushing a straggler to keep up, pressing on when a storm rolls in—when you are hyper-focused on getting to an end point.

- ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**
- Be Fire Safe
 - Extreme Heat Ready
 - ReadyPA Action Sheet: Heat Exhaustion or Heat Stroke



What if I get lost? The first thing you can do is acknowledge that you are lost. **Remain calm!** While this sounds easy, many people will panic when in an undesirable, unfamiliar situation. Remaining calm will help a lost individual make sound, rational decisions. **Stop walking!** Walking with unfamiliar landmarks will often lead someone who is lost to wander in circles and potentially cause a longer rescue time. Seek or build a shelter and a fire depending on weather conditions.

Ask a Ranger



I want to have an enjoyable and safe experience. Is there anything else you can tell me?

Please keep all campfires contained in the grills or fire rings. It is a campfire, not a bonfire! For the sake of your own safety, the natural resources, other hikers, and a potential search party, it is paramount that you stay on that trail. Your odds of encountering a risky obstacle go up when you step off the path. It is also easy to get turned around. In some places, the vegetation is so thick that signs can disappear really quickly, and if you do get lost or incapacitated off-trail, a rescue mission will be much more difficult and dangerous. Veering off the trail also leads to what rangers call "social trails," or unofficial routes carved into the wilderness by wayward hikers. Social trails can trample vegetation, disturb animals, cause erosion, and endanger hikers after you, who might think it is the right way. Be especially careful when taking pictures. Many times, photographers become more focused on taking a photo rather than securing their footing. Make sure you are in a safe, solid location before snapping your shot. Remember to please not feed the animals in state parks. Feeding any animal will draw them to the roads and lead to many dangerous situations for deer and people. The park is a natural environment where deer can feed and live off the land. Use insect repellent that contains DEET. Ticks are becoming more prevalent in Pennsylvania. Wear light colored long pants and tuck your pants into your socks when hiking. Wear a loose fitting long sleeve shirt to protect your arms. This will help you spot ticks easier. Always do a full body tick check after your outdoor adventure. Remove a tick by using tweezers, grasping the tick as close to the skin as possible, and pulling upward. Be sure to disinfect the bite.

Do not pick or eat anything! Even the most skilled outdoorsman should avoid picking or eating anything growing in a state park. In the wilderness, there's such a variety of plants that it is easy to misidentify them, even if you are familiar with them. Besides, even taking a small amount from the environment may have an ecological impact you don't intend.

If hiking with children, plan your hike to their ability and endurance level. Trust me, you do not want to have to carry a 40 pound five-year-old down the trail!

To learn more about Pennsylvania State Parks, visit: www.dcnr.pa.gov.



Ryan Dysinger, Assistant Director
PA Bureau of State Parks, DCNR

Safe Fun in the Sun

Beginning in summer 2017, DCNR's Bureau of State Parks partnered with the Department of Health and began supplying free sunscreen at Pine Grove Furnace State Park, Cumberland County, and Codorus State Park, York County. In 2018, new parks added were Bald Eagle, Centre County; Gifford Pinchot, York County; and Nockamixon, Bucks County. The program now has been expanded to nine state parks. The most recently added locations include Little Buffalo, Perry County; Laurel Hill, Somerset County; Presque Isle, Erie County; and Caledonia, Franklin County.

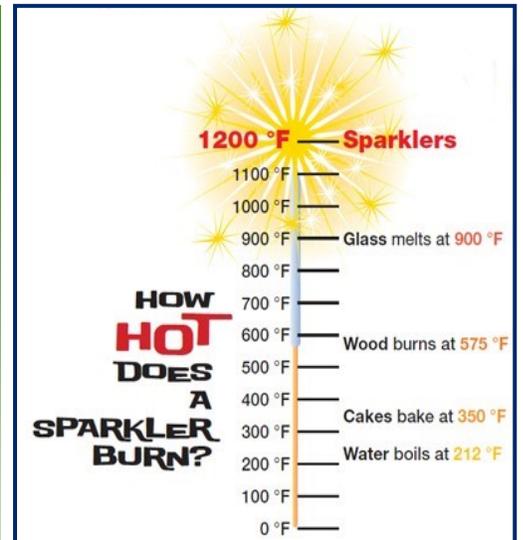
The Bureau of State Parks noted the sunscreen dispenser program has the potential of reaching 500,000 Pennsylvanians at its nine parks. DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn points out that "In promoting outdoor activity, we're aware over 8,500 Americans are diagnosed with skin cancer each day, and these dispensers should prove invaluable to visitors to our lakes, beaches and pools who may overlook sunscreen when packing for a day's outing."

Be Fire Safe PA

The Pennsylvania Office of the State Fire Commissioner provides information on what we should know about fireworks and how to be safe.

8 Ways to Celebrate Safely

- Whether attending a professional display, or using consumer fireworks, **always** remain at a safe distance from the ignition location.
- **Never** use fireworks after consuming alcohol, or other medications or substances that can impair judgement or the ability to react quickly to an emergency.
- **Never** point or throw fireworks at another person. They are not toys.
- Keep a bucket of water or garden hose handy in case of a fire.
- Only allow adults to light fireworks one at a time, then quickly back away.
- **Never** pick up or try to relight fireworks that have not fully ignited.
- **Never** allow children to play with fireworks, even sparklers, which can burn at temperatures of at least 1200 degrees.
- After the fireworks have burned, fully douse them with water before disposing of them to prevent trash fires.

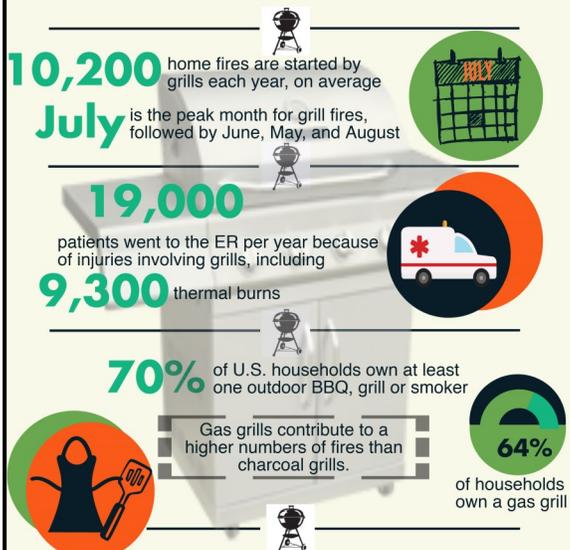


Grilling Safety

Summer is the season of cookouts. Grills should be checked for rust, insects, spiders, grease and other debris before use. Worn gas hoses should be replaced. Never grill indoors, in a garage, breezeway or carport. Grills should only be used 10 feet away from your house or any building.

GRILLING STATISTICS

from **NFPA**

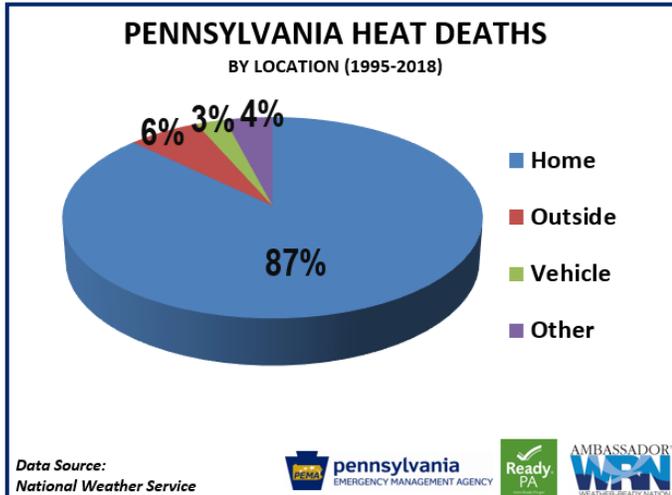


- Children under five accounted for an average of 2,000 or 38%, of the contact-type burns per year. These burns typically occurred when someone, often a child, bumped into, touched or fell on the grill, grill part or hot coals.
- Gas grills were involved in an average of 8,700 home fires per year, including 3,600 structure fires and 5,100 outdoor fires. Leaks or breaks were primarily a problem with gas grills. Eleven percent of gas grill structure fires and 23% of outside gas grill fires were caused by leaks or breaks.
- Charcoal or other solid-fueled grills were involved in 1,100 home fires per year, including 600 structure fires and 500 outside fires.

To learn more on how to safely grill, visit the [National Fire Protection Association \(www.NFPA.org\)](http://www.NFPA.org).

Extreme Heat Safety

In 2018, there were five deaths attributed to weather in Pennsylvania. Two of the deaths were from heat. The annual average heat deaths are nearly one and a half the rate of flooding deaths nationwide. Excessive heat is often ignored or forgotten about as a weather hazard. Heat is a real threat and can be a challenge for all, especially the oldest and youngest Pennsylvanians.



The National Weather Service will issue heat advisories and excessive heat warnings for extended periods of heat to alert the public to be prepared for potential illness or other problems, but it is up to you to make sure you are paying attention to your body when the temperatures rise.

In most of the U.S., extreme heat is a long period (2 to 3 days) of high heat and humidity with temperatures above 90 degrees.

The State Meteorologist provides us with these five basic tips to cool down when temperatures rise. These tips can help reduce heat illness and unnecessary death.



"We want to make sure Pennsylvania residents enjoy these warmer months but also stay safe," Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. "It's important to protect yourself from harmful ultraviolet radiation and stay hydrated to prevent heat-related illnesses. Heat-related illnesses, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke, can be dangerous and deadly."

To learn more about how to prepare for summer weather, visit the Department of Health's website at: www.health.pa.gov.

SAFETY

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- **Stay Hydrated!** Drink plenty of water on a regular basis. Avoid beverages with caffeine, sugar and alcohol as they dehydrate the body.
- **Take a Break!** If you are working outdoors, make regular stops for time in the shade or air conditioning.
- **10 to 3 - Not for Me:** Avoid strenuous activities outdoors during the hottest part of the day, typically from 10AM to 3PM.
- **Knock & Talk:** Be a good neighbor. Check on your older neighbors and those who are sick. Make sure they are drinking water and have a cool place to relax during the heat.
- **Look Before You Lock:** Check the back seat of your car every time to ensure you do not forget kids or pets while running errands.



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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

www.health.pa.gov

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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

www.pema.pa.gov

This Month's Preparedness Events

National Parks and Recreation Month

(www.nrpa.org/july)

(<http://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/Pages/default.aspx>)

Extreme Heat Awareness

(<https://www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Know-The-Threats/Pages/Extreme-Heat.aspx>)

(<https://www.ready.gov/heat>)

(<https://www.weather.gov/safety/heat>)

Additional Resources

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency: www.pema.pa.gov

ReadyPA: www.Ready.PA.gov

SERVPA: www.Serv.PA.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov

Office of the State Fire Commissioner: www.osfc.pa.gov

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services: www.dhs.pa.gov

Pennsylvania Department of Health: www.health.pa.gov

Pennsylvania State Animal Response Team: www.pasart.us

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation: www.penndot.gov

PA511Connect: www.511pa.com

Pennsylvania State Police: www.psp.pa.gov

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources: www.dcnr.pa.gov

HEAT EXHAUSTION

OR

HEAT STROKE

Faint or dizzy



Throbbing headache



Excessive sweating



No sweating



Cool, pale, clammy skin

Body temperature above 103°
Red, hot, dry skin



Nausea or vomiting



Nausea or vomiting

Rapid, weak pulse



Rapid, strong pulse



Muscle cramps



May lose consciousness



- Get to a cooler, air conditioned place
- Drink water if fully conscious
- Take a cool shower or use cold compresses

CALL 9-1-1

- Take immediate action to cool the person until help arrives

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Be Informed. Be Prepared. Be Involved.

