

Too hot? Park it

2-year-old Kaya Thornton plays in the sprinklers at Hillside Park in Greenfield Thursday afternoon.



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Soaring temps, sticky air send residents to splash park

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GREENFIELD — Thursday's intense humidity and high temperatures sent residents and out-of-towners alike running for the nearest water to beat the heat.

As of Thursday around 3:30 p.m., Tom Bevacqua, a meteorologist and weather columnist for The Recorder, said humidity was higher than 60 percent and temperatures had almost

reached 90 degrees.

At Hillside Park, Debbi Friedlander of Amherst and her 2-year-old granddaughter, Kaya Thornton, braced themselves as ice-cold water burst from sprinklers, providing a brief — and cool — respite.

"She's enthusiastic about everything," Friedlander said, as she watched Thornton careen around the water park, chasing sprinklers as they turned off and on.

Temperatures were hot enough Thursday to prompt the National Weather Service to issue a heat advisory.

The grandma and granddaughter were at the park along with several

"We knew it was gonna be hot," she continued. "You put the bathing suit in the car and you go to water, wherever that might be."

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Dalton Dove plays in sprinklers at Hillside Park in Greenfield Thursday afternoon.

Heat

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other kids and caretakers who had the same idea, including Laura Hutt, who was there with her son, Dalton Dove.

“Best place! We love the splash park,” said Jen Wilcox, who drove with her 3-year-old son, Lucas Wilcox, to the water park from their home in Gilford, Vt.

Temperatures were hot enough Thursday to prompt the National Weather Service to issue a heat advisory, with temperatures in the mid-90s and humidity around 70 percent, from 11 a.m. through 7 p.m. Friday for sections of the region, including Greenfield.

When asked about the warning, Bevacqua, who uses a calibrated thermometer for temperature readings, said he thinks the advisory was a little aggressive. According to Bevacqua, the weather service takes readings in Orange, Keene, Springfield and Westfield, but not Greenfield.

“There is a lot of humidity, but here’s the key,” Bevacqua said, “when the humidity is high, it takes a lot of energy to move the temperature up.”

Bevacqua said the temperatures shouldn’t get any higher than the low-90s.

Regardless of recorded



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2-year-old Kaya Thornton plays in the sprinklers at Hillside Park in Greenfield Thursday afternoon.

temperature, Thursday was hot enough to prompt emergency officials to remind the public of the dangers of heat-related injuries.

“You need to make sure you’re staying hydrated,” warned Zach Smith, director of South County EMS. He also said that symptoms such as cramping and dizziness are serious health concerns, and should be treated as such.

As a reminder, Smith said there are cooling stations throughout the region, at public places such as libraries or senior centers, where people can go to escape the heat.

Dr. Sundeep Shukla, attending emergency department physician at Baystate Franklin Medical Center, agreed that symptoms of heat-related injuries shouldn’t be taken lightly.

“It can happen in a matter of minutes for most people,” he said, as he described the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke. According to Shukla, heat exhaustion reveals itself in symptoms such as sweating, dizziness and vomiting.

Heat stroke, he continued, which is worse, happens when the body can’t regulate its

temperature anymore.

“In extremes of age,” Shukla explained, “either really young people or really old people, it can happen even sooner.”

As far as symptoms, Shukla said that heat stroke reveals itself most distinctly in fever and hot, reddish skin. He also said that anyone who’s experiencing symptoms of heat stroke should call 911 right away.

“The important thing to do would be to stop any type of strenuous activities,” Smith said about precautions people can take to prevent heat-related injuries, adding that drinking water, moving into air-conditioning or shade, and wearing loose clothing are also good steps to take.

Over the next few days, Bevacqua predicts some sunny periods interspersed by clouds, with the possibility of a thunderstorm.

The National Weather Service said to expect patchy fog and heavy rain through the weekend, with temperatures around 90 degrees.

Cooling stations open around town

Greenfield Health Director Nicole Zabko said the town will offer cooling stations from today through Saturday at the Greenfield Public Library on

Main Street and the Greenfield Senior Center in the Weldon House off High Street.

Food will not be served at any of the locations.

The hours will be:

Greenfield Library — 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, and 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday.

Greenfield Senior Center — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday and Friday.

Zabko also offered tips to keep safe in the heat.

- Never leave children or pets alone in a closed vehicle. Even with the windows cracked open, interior temperatures can rise almost 20 degrees within 10 minutes.

- Check with your local authorities or Call 2-1-1 to find locations of cooling centers or shelters near you.

- Know the symptoms of and watch out for heat-related illnesses. Call 9-1-1 to report emergencies.

- Be a good neighbor. Check on family, friends and neighbors, especially the elderly, those who live alone, those with medical conditions, those who may need additional assistance and those who may not have air-conditioning.

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