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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Safety tips for healthy and happy holiday weekend

LAS VEGAS – June 30, 2006 – Summer fun and the 4th of July are synonymous with time spent outdoors, barbeques and recreational water activities. In order to help ensure a healthy and happy holiday weekend the Southern Nevada Health District is offering a few simple safety tips.

Heat Safety

High temperatures are common during the summer months and it is important for people to keep in mind that even short periods of exposure can cause health problems that range from minor to life threatening. Minor heat-related illnesses include sunburn and heat rash and while the immediate effects of a sunburn may be short-lived the long-term consequences can be much more serious. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke require immediate medical attention.

It is important that everyone wear sunscreen to help protect against permanent damage to the skin and skin cancers. Despite the heat associated with living in Southern Nevada, outdoor activities may be enjoyed year-round if the proper precautions are followed. Exercise early in the morning or later in the evenings and always drink plenty of liquids.

Illnesses transmitted by mosquitoes, ticks and rodents

Mosquitoes, ticks and rodents can transmit illnesses such as West Nile virus, plague and hantavirus to people.

When outdoors, use insect repellents containing DEET, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Follow the directions on the package. Wear pants and long-sleeved shirts when hiking or camping and spray repellent on clothes and exposed areas of skin. Light colored clothing can help you see mosquitoes or ticks that land on you. Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, notably at dawn and dusk (the first two hours after sunset). Eliminate areas of standing water around your home, including bird baths and unmaintained swimming pools.

The public is advised to avoid contact with any rodent species and to follow general precautions to prevent mice from living around homes, sheds and other enclosed areas.

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Recreational Water Safety

Never leave a child alone near any body of water in which a child's nose and mouth can be submerged. Never use inflatable devices as a substitute for adult supervision. Never consider children to be "drown-proof" despite swimming skills or experience.

Prevent germs from causing illness at the pool:

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea. This is especially important for kids in diapers. You can spread germs in the water and make other people sick.
- Don't swallow the pool water. In fact, avoid getting water in your mouth.
- Practice good hygiene. Take a shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.
- Take your kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often. Waiting to hear "I have to go" may mean that it's too late.
- Change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside. Germs can spread to surfaces and objects in and around the pool and spread illness.
- Wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming.

Food safety

Meats, poultry and cut fresh fruits and vegetables should be refrigerated until ready to serve. Discard any food left out more than 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature is above 90 F).

Cooked meats should be kept at 140 F or warmer until served. Refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers. Use a food thermometer to be sure the food has reached a safe internal temperature:

- Poultry, 180 F
- Chicken breasts, 170 F
- Hamburgers and all cuts of pork, 160 F
- Beef, veal and lamb steaks, roasts and chops, 145 F
- Fully cooked meats, like hot dogs, 165 F

Hands should be washed with warm soapy water before and after handling fresh produce and raw meat, as well as after changing diapers or handling pets. Be careful not to cross contaminate. Use one cutting board and utensil for produce, another for meats.

For more information on summer safety and health topics, access the health district website at www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org.

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