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## **Public Health and Safety Officials Work to Strengthen Heat Emergency Response Procedures**

SACRAMENTO—Dozens of state and local health and safety officials have formed a task force to expand emergency response efforts in anticipation of the next major heat wave.

The Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHSA) today convened a working group of state and local officials following the heat wave that struck California in mid-July. The task force will analyze emergency response measures and expand the most successful models to high impact areas throughout the state.

"California has a nationally recognized emergency response system developed after years of earthquakes, fires and floods," OES Director Henry Renteria said. "We were able to use that experience in responding to extreme heat, and we must learn all we can from what worked and what didn't as we head into the rest of this summer."

CHHSA Secretary Kimberly Belshé agreed, adding, "The deaths that occurred during last month's unprecedented heat wave are a tragedy and we will review what occurred in this situation and coordinate with our local government partners to determine additional steps that should be taken during future heat waves."

Following the July record-breaking heat wave, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger directed OES Director Renteria and CHHSA Secretary Belshé to convene a task force to look at ways to strengthen public safety through continuous coordination between state and local health and emergency planners during a heat-related incident.

The task force will continue to meet as a working group to establish health and safety protocols for public education and outreach efforts, safety checks on vulnerable Californians, evacuations of medical facilities and establishment of cooling centers and information lines during future heat waves.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture, Resources Agency, State and Consumer Services Agency and Labor and Workforce Development Agency will also participate in the task force.

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## Heat Emergency Response Task Force

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Members of the task force include representatives from the following organizations:

California State Association of Counties  
County Welfare Directors Association of California  
California Conference of Local Health Officers  
County Health Executives Association of California  
League of California Cities  
Regional Council of Rural Counties  
California Association of Public Authorities  
Urban Counties Caucus  
California State Sheriffs Association  
California Police Chiefs Association  
California Fire Chiefs Association  
American Red Cross  
Emergency Medical Services Administrators Association of California

The task force will work to enhance procedures, such as:

- Working with county emergency management services, California Conference of Local Health Officers, fire, sheriff, police and city and county representatives to define ways to improve emergency communications in public health emergencies.
- Using technology to improve the timely distribution of critical, life-saving information.
- Defining specific characteristics of cooling centers, including expected operating hours, key elements and notification of locations.
- Outlining transportation plans so medically fragile and other vulnerable populations have access to cooling centers.

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