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Riverside County  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Coachella Valley seniors encouraged to run air conditioning during heat wave**

Riverside County health officials are encouraging Coachella Valley seniors to remain in their homes during the current heat wave and use air conditioning to stay cool, then seek financial assistance to pay the higher utility bill.

The county's system of cooling centers has not been activated, but triple-digit temperatures are predicted for the weekend in the Coachella Valley and eastern Riverside County. Officials urge that seniors over 65 remain at home and use their air conditioners to stay cool, then reach out to the Riverside County Office of Aging for utility assistance when the bill arrives.

"In many instances residents were using our cooling centers so they would not run their air conditioners at home and save on their utility bill," said Kim Saruwatari, director of Public Health for Riverside County. "When temperatures are this high it would be potentially dangerous not to run your air conditioner."

Cooling centers are normally located throughout the county at community centers, libraries, senior centers and other locations. The cooling centers generally kick off June 1, but these sites are not prepared for an earlier opening, in part, because of the current response to coronavirus and the existing restrictions on public gatherings and social distancing requirements.

Seniors who reach out to the Office of Aging can get help paying the higher utility bills, Saruwatari said. Seniors who have no air conditioning at home can call 2-1-1 and see if other assistance that could provide relief from the heat.

"The top priority is to protect the most vulnerable of our community," said Chair V. Manuel Perez, Fourth District Supervisor. "No one should have to risk their lives because they can't afford to run their air conditioning."

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