



New heatwave service to forecast extreme heat events

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The Bureau of Meteorology is now piloting a new heatwave service to forecast the onset of extreme heat events.

Assistant Director for Weather Services, Alasdair Hainsworth, said the new service complements the Bureau's existing maximum and minimum seven (7) day temperature forecasts across the country.

"The heatwave service provides a measure of the build-up of 'excess' heat and will provide a more advanced indicator than temperature alone in anticipating the impact of heat stress," Mr Hainsworth said.

"The pilot service uses a heatwave intensity index that assesses the build up of heat over a period of time, taking into account the long-term climate of a location and the maximum and minimum temperatures leading up to a heatwave event.

"Severe and extreme heatwaves pose significant risks to human health and safety, in particular the elderly who are more vulnerable to the effects of heat stress.

"When these average conditions are exceeded over a period of time by continuously high night-time and day-time temperatures, heat stress becomes a critical factor in human survival and infrastructure resilience.

"The new pilot service will map levels of intensity for each heatwave event, indicating areas of 'severe' and 'extreme' heatwave at the upper end of the scale.

"We expect there will be significant interest from stakeholders across the emergency services and public health sectors, as well as the energy, transport, horticulture and livestock industries," he said.

This new service has the potential to not only reduce the human impact of heatwaves, but also mitigate their economic impact by better informing stakeholders and allowing them to plan ahead.

A recent report by *PriceWaterhouseCoopers* noted that heatwaves have taken more lives in Australia than any other natural hazard since European settlement.

For further information:

www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave/

PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2011): [*Protecting human health and safety during severe and extreme heat events.*](#)

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