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| Guide to broadcasting epidemic thunderstorm asthma forecasts and warnings |
| 1 October to 31 December  |

This document provides a guide to the Department of Health and Human Services’ epidemic thunderstorm asthma forecast and warning system.

Forecasting system

The epidemic thunderstorm asthma forecast system will operate between 1 October and 31 December. It combines the forecasting of a certain uncommon type of thunderstorm and forecasting grass pollen counts across Victoria.  It spans three days and uses a colour-coded scale from low to high risk: green (low), orange (moderate) and red (high).

* A **low** risk (green) forecast means that the elements necessary for an epidemic thunderstorm asthma event are not expected and an event is unlikely.
* A **moderate** (yellow) risk forecast means that one of the elements necessary for an event may be present (i.e. a high pollen count or a severe thunderstorm storm).
* A **high** risk (red) forecast means that both a high pollen count and severe thunderstorms have been forecast which increases the risk for an epidemic thunderstorm asthma event.

**Forecasts are not a formal ‘warning’ and do not mean an epidemic thunderstorm asthma event is certain to occur, rather they are designed to inform people at risk that they should be prepared.**

The forecasting system is also not designed to forecast the risk of individual’s suffering asthma and hay fever symptoms, which occur every year during the grass pollen season.

The forecast can be found on:
**Health.vic** – [www.ow.ly/xk8a30m2qUT](http://ow.ly/xk8a30m2qUT) and **Melbourne Pollen** - [www.melbournepollen.com.au](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cttru2906%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CTemp%5Cnotes4DE2D7%5Cwww.melbournepollen.com.au)

Warnings system

On the day of a **high risk** forecast, the department will issue an ‘Advice’ message for the BOM region/s identified on VicEmergency – www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond.

The Advice message encourages people with asthma or hay fever to take actions to protect themselves and their families; and advises people to stay out of the wind gusts before and during the storm.

Should the department see an increase in ambulance call outs and patient presentations at hospitals, we will issue a ‘Warning’ or ‘Emergency Warning’ with up-to-date information and with the geographic areas at risk identified based on the movement of the thunderstorm.

When reporting on thunderstorm asthma please encourage people to…

* Check the forecast daily and download the VicEmergency app and set up watchzone to receive epidemic thunderstorm asthma warnings
* Carry their asthma and hay fever medication with them at all times during grass pollen season.
* Stay out of the wind gusts before and during the storm on high risk days
* Follow their asthma or hay fever treatment plans, or to see their doctor if they don’t have a treatment plan.
* Learn the four steps of asthma first aid – www.ow.ly/DZfy30lFAmq

End note

The science of forecasting for epidemic thunderstorm asthma events is very new and, as with all forecasts, there is an element of uncertainty.

It is also important to note that the forecasting system has been designed to forecast the risk of epidemic thunderstorm asthma events, where a large number of people rapidly develop asthma symptoms over a short period of time.

It is not designed to forecast the risk of individual’s suffering asthma and hay fever symptoms, which occur every year during the grass pollen season.

For more information

For more information contact the Department of Health and Human Services health media team.

Phone: 03 9096 8860 (option 1).

Or visit our website: Thunderstorm asthma – www.ow.ly/TCNp30lESUu