

FEELING THE HEAT

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Record high in Richmond

Worst of heat wave should be over, with cooler weekend ahead

BY JILL SAKAI

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Virginia's most recent heat wave is going out with a bang, with records of 102 degrees set yesterday in Richmond and Norfolk.

Richmond's newest triple-digit high, reached at 3:35 p.m., broke the record of 99 set in 1987. The all-time high in Richmond still stands at 107, reached Aug. 6, 1918.

Other records set yesterday were in Wakefield, 100; Winchester, 100; and Williamsburg, 102.

Though a heat advisory is in effect today, with forecasts calling for highs in the mid to upper 90s and a heat index close to 105, the worst should be over.

A front expected to reach the Richmond area late this afternoon should break the heat, bringing a chance of showers and thunderstorms that could last through the weekend.

Highs are expected to top out in the upper 80s tomorrow and Sunday. Tomorrow night could bring the first drop below 70 since July 24.

Across the state, utility companies reported record power usage.

■ Columbia Gas of Virginia customers set a record Wednesday for a single day of gas use at 50.8 million cubic feet. Columbia spokesman Bob Innes said the company expected to exceed that record yesterday but will not know until today.

■ Dominion Virginia Power reported a record for peak electricity use of 19,256 megawatts Wednesday. Dominion spokesman Dan Genest said the utility appeared on track to set another record yesterday, projecting a peak of 19,300 megawatt hours of electricity.

■ Appalachian Power Co. reported that its Virginia and West Virginia customers set a summer peak for electricity usage at 6,401 megawatt hours Wednesday.

Heat was the prime suspect in a

three-hour blackout that struck the College of William and Mary yesterday about 7:30 a.m. Bob Dillman, the college's associate vice president for facilities management, said technicians traced the problem to an underground cable. The huge electrical demand may have exacerbated a minor fault in the cable, he said.

In Caroline County, officials said yesterday they had fully restored water to about 40 businesses and more than 450 residents in the Ladysmith and Carmel Church areas. Those affected were without water for most of Wednesday because of a county pump failure.

In the Shenandoah Valley, the heat is damaging apples on the branches, and poultry farmers are keeping a close eye on their birds.

Excessive heat can bleach and burn apples' skin while they're on branches, said Frederick County apple grower Dudley Rinker. He had started to see damage in his orchard, he said Wednesday.

To protect poultry, farmers use large fans and evaporation cooling systems in their coops, said Hobe Bauhan, president of the Virginia Poultry Federation.

Amid the extreme heat, there is some good news.

Dispersed by a slight breeze, air pollution dropped to healthful levels in the Richmond area yesterday and should be fine today.

"I think this is it for the heat wave as far as air pollution goes," said Dan Salkovitz, a meteorologist with the state Department of Environmental Quality.

Local hospitals were not reporting an excess of patients suffering with heat-related illnesses yesterday.

Although somewhat lower temperatures are predicted today, Fridays at Sunset organizers were planning to erect a misting tent for LL Cool J's performance tonight on Brown's Island.

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LINDY KEAST RODMAN/TIMES-DISPATCH

Froilan Valvede took a break on a shady rock yesterday while his friends swam in the James River at Pony Pasture.



KATHRYN ORTH

Don Ford (left) and Jermaine Dove sweated while moving rugs in Building No. 7 at Green Front Furniture in Farmville. The temperature in the building without air conditioning was uncertain, but the bank thermometer up the street read 107 degrees.

Sweating, heaving through the day

Amid heat, the work doesn't stop at Green Front Furniture store

BY KATHRYN ORTH

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

FARMVILLE — Dick Cralle, who has lived here his whole life, says, "I can't remember it being this hot, this long."

"We were in India buying rugs eight or nine weeks ago. It was 111 degrees there, and it didn't feel as hot as this," said Cralle, owner of Green Front Furniture.

Yesterday in an un-air-conditioned building, employees Don Ford and Jermaine Dove sweated through the heat, heaving heavy rugs out for customers to get a better look. Dove knows that the massive rugs, especially the ones hanging on the walls, insulate the building in the winter. He suspects they might hold the heat in the summer.

"Feels like it, anyway," Dove said.

In yesterday's heat, the men took frequent breaks while their customers compared rugs.

"I keep wiping sweat, drinking plenty of Gatorade and standing in front of the fan," Ford said, pulling a wet rag from his back pocket to wipe his face.

The old warehouses usually cool off at night and the thick walls keep the interior cool, even without air conditioning, Cralle said. But this week, nighttime temperatures have stayed nearly as high as those during the day, he said.

They have a good-natured rivalry over who has it worst when the temperature hovers near 100 degrees — the guys who flip and carry wool rugs, or the guys who drive the forklifts outdoors, unloading truckloads of furniture.

"Personally, I think we've got it a lot better than the guys on the forklifts," Ford said.

While he worked, Ford looked forward to cooling off with a beer — just one — when he got home. "I'll sit back and eat," he said. "Beer tastes great — one good cold one," he said. "I don't go overboard."

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VIRGINIA ROUNDUP

Richmond, Norfolk, Wallops Island and Arlington County set record highs yesterday, and several other Virginia localities came close.

Location	Yesterday	Aug. 3 record
Richmond	102	99 (1987)
Norfolk	102	101 (1980)
Wallops Island	97	93 (1987)
Lynchburg	97	100 (1935)
Danville	95	98 (1980)
Blacksburg	90	92 (1975)
Roanoke	96	100 (1963)
Charlottesville	98	101 (1930)
Arlington County	101	100 (1930)

SOURCE: National Weather Service

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