

## **Paris sizzles, London boils as record heat threatens Europe**

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Across London and Paris, authorities and charity workers handed out water and sunscreen to homeless people and opened day centres for them to rest and shower.

***Paris and London are bracing for record temperatures, as the second heatwave this summer bakes the continent. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)***

**Paris:** Hot, hotter, hottest! Paris, London and points across Europe are bracing for record temperatures on Thursday, as the second heatwave this summer bakes the continent.

Climate scientists warn this could become the new normal in many parts of the world. But temperate Europe \_ where air conditioning is rare \_ isn't equipped for the temperatures frying the region this week.

So tourists frolicked in fountains to seek relief and authorities and volunteers fanned out to help the elderly, sick and homeless hit hardest by the heat. Trains were cancelled in Britain and France, and French authorities urged travellers to stay home.

One by one, heat record is being broken across Europe. On Thursday, the Paris area could be as hot as 42 C (108 F) as a result of hot, dry air coming from northern Africa that's trapped between cold stormy systems.

London might see 39 C (102 F). And swaths of Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Switzerland could face temperatures exceeding 40 C (104 F).

And this is only the latest of several hot days: Belgium and Germany recorded their all-time high temperatures Wednesday.

Germany's record of 40.5 degrees (104.9 F) is likely going to be very short-lived, however, the German Weather Service is expecting even higher temperatures Thursday.

Across London and Paris, authorities and charity workers handed out water and sunscreen to homeless people and opened day centres for them to rest and shower.

"They are in the street all day, under the sun. No air conditioning, no way to protect oneself from the heat, so for some it's really quite complicated," said Ruggero Gatti, an IT worker joining other Red Cross volunteers handing out water bottles, soup and yoghurt to the homeless in the Paris suburb of Boulogne.

Tourists clustered around fountains and canals. "It's too hot. In Brazil, where I live, we have the beach but here, since there is no beach, we can enjoy this fountain," said Ederson Lista-Viajes, a Brazilian tourist playing with spurts of water at Trocadero plaza across from the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

France is particularly on alert after a 2003 heatwave killed nearly 15,000 people, especially the elderly.

Since then the government has introduced a colour-coded heat alert system to warn people when temperatures are expected to rise to dangerous levels in their area and trigger government assistance efforts.

The alert system went to its maximum level of red for the first time during last month's heatwave, when France saw its highest-ever recorded temperature of 46 degrees. On Thursday, about one-fifth of French territory was under a red alert, stretching from the English Channel through the Paris region and down to Burgundy.

The national rail authority and Paris public transit system urged passengers to avoid travel Thursday. Messages to "Hydrate yourselves!" came from the radio, television and public message boards.

French Health Minister Agnez Buzyn said that temperatures on Thursday are expected to be 2 degrees higher than in 2003. Some 20 million French are expected to be hit by the heatwave, she said.

Since summers in Europe are usually mild, few homes have air conditioning. It's not that common in hospitals, stores or restaurants either.

Electric fans are selling fast around Paris \_ and traditional folding fans seem to be making a comeback, waved by many on the stuffy subway.

The heatwave is intense but expected to be short, with temperatures dropping Friday and Saturday.

As emissions continue to warm the planet, scientists say there will be more and hotter heat waves, like those increasingly hitting the U.S. though it's too early to know whether this hot spell is linked to man-made climate change.

"There is likely the DNA of climate change in the record-breaking heat that Europe and other parts of the world are experiencing. And it is, unfortunately, going to continue to worsen," said Marshall Shepherd, professor of meteorology at the University of Georgia.

- AP