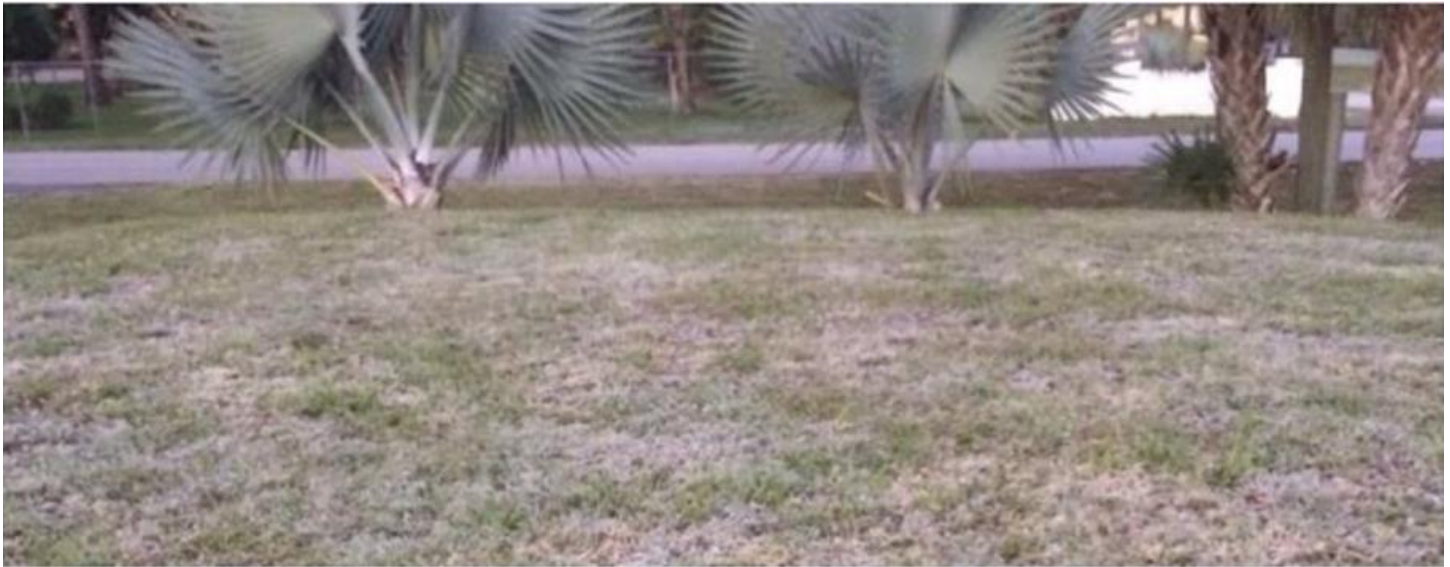




**MIAMI-SOUTH FLORIDA**  
**National Weather Service**  
**Forecast Office**  
<http://www.weather.gov/miami>



*Frost in Golden Gate Estates in January 2014*

**2017 Severe Weather Awareness Week**

**Friday, January 27<sup>th</sup> is Temperature Extremes and Wildfire Awareness Day**

Although a mild and sunny climate is south Florida's greatest natural asset, extremes of heat and cold occur from time to time. These extremes can be harmful and even fatal if people do not take precautions. The heat and humidity of summer can combine to cause temperatures to feel more like 105 degrees on many days, which present a significant health risk even to those used to our warm and humid summers. Heat index values rarely reach critical values of around 110 degrees in South Florida, but when they do, the risk of life-threatening heat stroke increases dramatically.

The most common cases of heat exposure involve school children, especially during the hot summer months when outdoor activities are more common. Heat-exposure-related incidents are notoriously under-reported, and it's likely that many cases of heat exposure occur yearly in South Florida due to the persistent heat and humidity common

during much of the year. However, anyone is vulnerable to heat exposure if proper precautions are not taken.

The number-one protection against heat exposure is simply to stay out of the heat, especially during the hottest times of the day. If outside, make sure to drink plenty of water and take frequent breaks in the shade.



### **Never Leave Children, Disabled Adults or Pets in Parked Vehicles!!**

Each year, dozens of children and untold numbers of pets left in parked vehicles die from hyperthermia. Hyperthermia is an acute condition that occurs when the body absorbs more heat than it can handle. Hyperthermia can occur even on a mild day. Studies have shown that the temperature inside a parked vehicle can rapidly rise to a dangerous level for children, pets and even adults. Leaving the windows slightly open does not significantly decrease the heating rate. The effects can be more severe on children because their bodies warm at a faster rate than adults.

More information on heat safety can be found at the [NWS heat awareness page](#).

Although you can't feel it or see it, ultraviolet radiation can cause damage to the skin and eyes, even on seemingly cloudy days or in shady areas. Ultraviolet radiation, or simply UV radiation, is strong most of the year in subtropical latitudes such as south Florida. The peak hours of UV radiation are normally between 10 am and 2 pm when a high sun angle allows much of the energy to penetrate to the surface. The body's quick response to excessive UV radiation causes sunburn, which can happen in only a matter of minutes. Prolonged or excessive exposure has been proven to cause potentially fatal skin cancer or cataracts, a form of blindness. About 90 percent of all skin cancer cases

are linked to UV radiation. Put on sunblock, especially on children, when planning to be outdoors for a prolonged period of time.

In an area known for its mild winters, it's hard to imagine life-threatening cold, but freezing temperatures occur over at least parts of South Florida on a yearly basis. During the record-breaking cold episodes of January and December of 2010, freezing temperatures occurred over almost all of South Florida, impacting both people and crops. Two people died as a result of hypothermia in January 2010 and an additional 7 people were injured from carbon monoxide poisoning. South Florida's agricultural industry suffered losses in the millions of dollars as a direct result of the freezing temperatures.

NWS products such as Freeze Watches and Warnings, and wind chill watches, warnings and advisories alert the public to the threat of potentially life threatening cold temperatures.

During cold events, be extremely careful when using heating devices as deaths often occur as a result of faulty equipment or from improper use. Never use candles or cooking grills indoors, and be very careful with space heaters. Check your heating equipment at least once a year to make sure it is in proper working conditions. Check on the elderly to make sure they have adequate heating. Protect pets and plants during significant cold episodes.

## **WILDFIRES**



*Wildfire on Lake Okechobee*

The typically dry winter and spring of South Florida means that our area is prone to prolonged periods of little to no rainfall. This increases the threat of wildfires which

peaks during the spring months from March through May when the dry season coincides with windy conditions, increasing sun angle and warmer temperatures. Therefore, all persons are strongly urged to follow the advice of forestry and fire safety officials to avoid causing wildfires. Many South Florida wildfires are the result of human activities. Be careful when discarding cigarettes, matches and barbecue coals and don't park vehicle in high grass where a hot catalytic converter or tailpipe can start a fire.

When conditions are conducive for the rapid spread of wildfires, the National Weather Service issues Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings which indicate the location and time of the greatest threat.

Local, state and national partners provide good information on wildfire awareness, such as the [Florida Forest Service](#) and [Firewise](#).

Information regarding extreme temperatures and weather conditions conducive to the spreading of wildfires can be obtained by visiting the National Weather Service Miami Forecast Office website at [www.weather.gov/southflorida](http://www.weather.gov/southflorida) and clicking on the Current Hazards link.