

## **Heatwave Preparedness and Response Plan for Gram Rakshak Dal (GRD) , Sagar Rakshak Dal (SRD) and Civil Defence Volunteers in Gujarat**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026 Time: 15:00 to 16:30 PM**

Heatwaves have become a serious concern in Gujarat, especially during the summer months when temperatures often rise above 40°C and remain high for several consecutive days. Due to climate change, the intensity and duration of heatwaves are increasing, which creates health risks for the general public as well as for frontline volunteers such as Gram Rakshak Dal, Sagar Rakshak Dal, and Civil Defence personnel.

These volunteers play an important role in maintaining public safety, supporting disaster response, managing crowds, assisting coastal and village communities, and helping during emergencies. However, during extreme heat conditions, they are also at risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. It is therefore very important that they understand the threat of heatwaves and take proper steps to protect themselves while serving the community.

Heat-related illnesses can develop quickly if proper care is not taken. Dehydration occurs when the body loses too much water through sweating. Heat exhaustion may cause weakness, dizziness, heavy sweating, headache, nausea, and muscle cramps.

Heat stroke is the most dangerous condition and can lead to confusion, unconsciousness, very high body temperature, and even death if not treated immediately. Early warning signs such as dry mouth, extreme tiredness, irritability, and reduced sweating should never be ignored. Volunteers must remain alert to these symptoms in themselves and in others. To protect themselves, volunteers should drink water frequently, even if they do not feel thirsty. Drinking water every 20 to 30 minutes during outdoor duty is recommended. Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), lemon water with salt and sugar, coconut water, and other natural fluids help maintain body salts.

Alcohol and excessive tea or coffee should be avoided as they increase dehydration. Wearing light-coloured, loose cotton clothes helps the body stay cool. Covering the head with a cap, hat, or cloth protects against direct sunlight. Sunglasses can reduce heat stress on the eyes. Whenever possible, outdoor duties should be minimized during peak heat hours between 12 noon and 4 PM.

Work should be organized in shifts so that no volunteer remains exposed to direct sunlight for long periods. Short rest breaks should be taken in shaded or cool areas. Eating light meals and including fruits such as watermelon and cucumber in the diet also help maintain hydration. If a volunteer starts feeling dizzy, confused, weak, or stops sweating despite high temperature, immediate action must be taken. The person should move to a shaded place, drink water slowly, rest, and inform the team leader. If symptoms do not improve or become severe, medical assistance must be sought without delay. Protecting one's own health is essential because a healthy volunteer can better serve the public.

At the same time, volunteers must support vulnerable members of the community. Elderly people living alone, children, pregnant women, outdoor laborers, fishermen, and slum dwellers are more sensitive to extreme heat. Volunteers should spread simple awareness messages advising people to avoid outdoor activities during peak heat hours, wear protective clothing, carry water, and stay in shaded or ventilated places. They should check on elderly individuals and guide people who show early signs of heat illness. In case someone shows symptoms of heat stroke, the person should immediately be moved to a cool shaded area, excess clothing loosened, and the body cooled using wet cloth or water. Small sips of water can be given if the person is conscious, and medical services should be contacted urgently, as heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency.

Coordination with district authorities, health departments, and local administration is very important. Volunteers can assist in managing drinking water distribution points, guiding crowds, and supporting emergency transport when needed. Before the peak summer season, basic training on heatwave safety, first aid measures, and proper use of ORS should be conducted. First aid kits should be kept ready with essential supplies.

Heatwaves in Gujarat are a growing public health threat, but with proper awareness, preparation, and simple preventive actions, risks can be significantly reduced. Gram Raksha Dal, Sagar Rakshak Dal, and Civil Defence Volunteers are key community protectors. By taking care of their own health and actively guiding the public, they can reduce heat-related illnesses and ensure safety during extreme heat conditions. Preparedness, alertness, and teamwork are the foundation of effective heatwave response.