

# Message to the Guard

Nr. 2

June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Subj: Heat Stress and related issues

I need to raise the issue of heat stress and accident/incidents.

HEAT STRESS/MEDICAL INCIDENT: Over the Memorial Day weekend I personally witnessed incidents in which a Guardsman was ultimately airlifted to a hospital for a medical episode (he was not a VASSAR Compatriot), and a heat stress issue.

It's that time of year in Virginia where temperatures and humidity can generate heat indices from the 80F into the high 90F range. Like the military, I view the heat index as a truer indicator of heat stress conditions on the body. A heat index of 90F+ results in "Black Flag" conditions where, unless troops are fully acclimated, outdoor physical activity is usually curtailed by base commanders.

Now that's for young men and women. Many of us are, well, no longer *Spring Chickens* and should be mindful that we aren't quite as tough as we used to be. This is very subjective, I know. Much depends on pre-existing medical conditions; age; what you are wearing; what you are carrying (e.g., musket); length of parade (if marching); how long you are exposed to full sun; and how long you are asked to remain standing. Aggregate these against the day's *heat index*, and you should err on the side of caution – take care of yourself.

I have attached a heat index table (source: NOAA) that you may find useful (which I posted in the Resource tab of the Color Guard section of Dispatch). You will also notice I added an entry to each outdoor Color Guard event that shows the estimated heat index. Amber font reflects predicted temperatures in the 80Fs and red font for temperatures in the 90Fs. Red indicates elevated risk of heat stress, and heat stroke (not good).

I'm not going to list things you need to do to mitigate the heat – you know the drill – but I'll emphasize water and Gatorade, and, if you own one, consider wearing the cooler militia hunting shirt instead of the heavy wool Continental jacket.

If you are the designated Event Color Guard Commander: please review the program and location with the event coordinator on arrival (or earlier). If the

coordinator has Guardsmen standing at attention in hot weather for an extended period – ask him to modify the program. Consider using Sentinels to rotate people at frequent intervals while keeping them involved in the program. There are several ways that the Colors can be presented – all are perfectly fine – and this is something I expect the Commander to address on scene. Take care of our gentlemen: ensure they are properly hydrated, and water is available.

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORTING: The VASSAR ExCom recently approved a new VASSAR Accident/Incident Reporting Action Plan, which includes an *A/I Report Form* (also attached). This is also posted in the Resources section of the VASSAR CG Dispatch website if you need to find it. If you are tapped to be an Event Color Guard Commander, print a paper copy, and keep it on hand or in your car. It is self-explanatory. Related to this will be a *Wallet Card* that (soon) will be issued to all Guardsmen as a handy reference (with phone numbers) to be used in the case of a serious Accident/Incident.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY (ICE): The above got me thinking about how to notify next-of-kin in the event a Guardsman keels over, is hospitalized without gaining consciousness, and there is no family member present at the event. In short, the ICE process. For my part, I carry a small 3 x 5 card in my right trouser pocket with information on who I want to be notified – just in case. Perhaps you may wish to consider the same.

Sorry to be a bit grim, but we need to be mindful of these things and plan/act accordingly. *Please err on the side of caution.* There are no SAR Heat Stress Medals.

Yours,

Chris Melhuish