

# St. Louis Cooled By Rain

## Heat Wave Ends After Killing Five

**By Tom Uhlenbrock**  
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

The deaths of two more people, including an elderly woman found overcome in her car, have been attributed to the 15-day heat wave that was swept from the area Wednesday by cooler weather blowing in from the north.

The deaths of Wesley Smith and LaVerne Perry brought to five the number of heat-related deaths since a heat warning was declared June 27 and upgraded to a heat alert two days later.

St. Louis Health Commissioner Dian Sharma said 68 people had reported to city emergency rooms with heat-related illnesses during the period.

Sharma canceled both the warning and alert Wednesday after predictions of cooler weather.

The National Weather Service said high temperatures will be in the 70s today through Saturday, with a chance of thundershowers today. The lows for the bistate area will be generally in the 60s.

Family members found Smith, 64, dead in his bed at 4 p.m. Tuesday. He lived alone in an apartment on the

**See RAIN, Page 12**

# Rain

From page one

second floor of a brick building in the 900 block of South Sarah Street.

"He did have some fans in the house, and they were running, but no air conditioning," said Rose Kowalski, chief investigator for the medical examiner's office.

Kowalski said Smith was on medication; neighbors said he had emphysema.

Perry, who lived in the 8900 block of Newby Street in the Baden area, was found dead in her car at about 11:30 p.m. Tuesday. The car windows were open, but her body temperature had risen to 109 degrees.

The car was parked in the 2600 block of Chouteau Avenue, an area of vacant lots and businesses.

"We understand she was seen in the parked car around 7 p.m., but nobody thought much of it," said Kowalski. "She frequented some banks in the area. Maybe she pulled over because she wasn't feeling well."

The medical examiner's office initially listed Perry's age as 68 but said she might have been much older.

"Her family feels she's probably in her 80s," Kowalski said. "But they said she had no known medical problems."

The switch in the weather was signaled by light rain that fell overnight and early Wednesday. The National Weather Service said slightly more than an inch of rain fell at Lambert Field from midnight to 9 p.m. Wednesday. The total for the month before that was .14 of an inch, compared to a normal rainfall of 1.28 inches.

The rains ushered in the cooler temperatures. The high temperature Tuesday was 98 degrees at 3:20 p.m. The official high for Wednesday was 88 degrees at a minute past midnight. At 3:20 p.m. Wednesday, the thermometer stood at 85 degrees.

Ron Haug, a meteorologist with the



**Dian Sharma**  
City health commissioner

National Weather Service, said the threat of rain should end today when the transition from steam bath to spring-like weather was completed.

"It looks like we'll be in for a pretty lengthy period of below-normal temperatures, probably right on through the weekend," Haug said.

"That's outstanding. You don't even have to leave town to take a vacation from the heat."

The steady rain and cooler temperatures also meant a reprieve for lawns, plants and trees.

"It sure is timely," said Chip Tynan, a horticulturist with the Missouri Botanical Garden. "We were getting a lot of questions regarding scorched leaves on trees and shrubs."

He said that tissue was lost but the rain and cooler weather would lessen further damage.

"Soil temperatures are still fairly high — it always lags behind air temperatures — so it will be a while before any lawns that have gone truly dormant will start to grow again," Tynan said.

Bob Kelly takes care of one of the area's largest lawns as chief of maintenance for the Gateway Arch grounds, which were crushed brown by the VP Fair crowds.

Kelly said the rain and cooler weather was "just exactly what the doctor ordered. This should help tremendously to green it up."

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because two other water flumes at the park have yet to open, the owners said.

Besides the admission price, there is a \$2.50 rental fee for tubes needed for the pools, a \$1.50 rental fee for lockers and a \$2 parking fee.

Larry Smith, another owner of the park, said that crowds had been heavy since opening day, although he declined to give specific numbers, saying they were "trade secrets."