

Southeast sweltering

United Press International

The Southeast sweltered through another scorcher with record high temperatures and bewildered residents trying to beat the heat closed schools and businesses. Forecasters had no hope of relief from the steamy heat blamed for at least 10 deaths.

North Carolina reported the nation's highest temperature for the fourth day in a row Tuesday — 108 at Goldsboro Air Force Base. It was 100 for the fourth day at Raleigh-Durham, and Fayetteville soared to 106 before severe thunderstorms dropped temperatures into the low 70s.

"It doesn't look like there's much of an end to it," said forecaster Joan Murray at the National Severe Storms Forecast Center. "Temperatures should drop, hopefully, a few degrees, maybe 5 or so, by Thursday, but after that, could increase again."

Athens, Ga., set a record with 104, Augusta hit 102 and Macon reported 101. The Stevens County school board pushed back Monday's first day of school by a week.

Georgia health officials reported a "near epidemic" of 31 heat-related deaths and 693 illnesses since June 21.

Officials reported at least 10 heat-related deaths since Saturday in Alabama, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and the St. Louis area, where 54 have died this summer due to heat.

One of the victims, Hazel M. Lewis, 67, of Louisville, Ky., had her closed apartment windows covered with plastic despite the heat.

Nationwide, more than 200 people have died heat-related deaths.

The hot, dry summer of '83 has ruined crops in the Corn Belt and decimated North Carolina poultry flocks. Even Agriculture Secretary John Block reported damage and losses at his 3,000-acre Illinois farm.

"We're used to weather-related tragedies in agriculture," he said. "It's not the first drought that I've seen. It may be one of the worst."

Nashville, Tenn., schools were closed for the second day and administrators said they would decide day-by-day whether to hold classes.