

Heat Melts Candles And Sells Fans

LEXINGTON

By **VIKKI BROUGHTON**
Staff Reporter

How hot was it this weekend?

So hot that you could see the heat — rising in shimmering waves above the asphalt.

So hot that people brave enough to venture onto the sidewalks of downtown Lexington took second glances bank clocks that read as high as 107 degrees.

At Lanier's Hardware, candles on a sale table outside melted into a pool of liquid wax. Many shoppers left the downtown sidewalk sale early and went to the nearest place where ice cream and a cool drink

could be found.

Edie Duffy at Coleman's Ice Cream said the restaurant was busier Friday afternoon than she had ever seen it.

"It was the biggest day since I've worked here — the people were just lined up here wanting milkshakes, lemonade and ice cream of all sorts. All afternoon the two of us working were doing all we could to keep scooping the ice cream."

At K mart, manager Larry Tucker said fans, air conditioners, garden hoses and sprinklers have been selling well for the past week. But Tucker noted that many people who would usually be shopping for school supplies and clothes this weekend simply didn't get out in the heat to do any shopping.

Downtown Lexington, in fact, looked eerily deserted by late Saturday afternoon and Sunday. Not even many Sunday drivers.

Bruce Kirk, superintendent of the Lexington Light and Power Department, said many of those people were at home running air conditioners and fans. There were no problems with meeting the demand for power this weekend, but Kirk added that the city probably came near a record peak load. Both the city and Davidson EMC set records for power demand in July, and spokesmen for both electricity vendors said August likely will tie or break those records.

Kirk expected a new record today when factories and businesses opened in the city.

Local plants and offices received

warnings from the state labor department to take precautionary steps to reduce the chance of heat-related illnesses on the job, the most common being heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

As hot as it was this weekend, though, the record for the highest temperature remained intact. According to the official readings, the temperature reached 103 degrees on Saturday and 104 on Sunday, breaking local records for those dates. But the all-time record high for Lexington was set in 1952, when the mercury rose to 107 degrees. In 1977, a heat wave of five days brought temperature that ranged from 100 to 105 degrees.

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Records were set in many nearby cities and the heat caused at least one death in a traffic accident.

Arthur Walter Feck, 66, of Clinton, collapsed in the heat Sunday afternoon while driving his motorcycle Sunday on U.S. 421 in Sampson County, the state Highway Patrol reported. Feck fell and rolled into a ditch.

Two Durham firefighters had to receive oxygen Sunday while fighting an apartment fire.

Fayetteville was the state's hottest spot Sunday with a reading of 110

degrees, the National Weather Service reported. That set an all-time record for the state, breaking the previous record of 109 degrees. The old record was set twice — on July 28, 1940 in Albemarle in Stanly County and on Sept. 6, 1954, in Weldon in Halifax County.

Four other North Carolina cities broke record highs, with Asheville setting an all-time record with 100 degrees. The previous all-time record was 98 set in 1936.

The mercury climbed to 103 in Charlotte, shattering the old record of 98 set in 1955. It was also one degree short of equaling Charlotte's all-time high of 104 set on Sept. 6, 1954.

In Raleigh, temperatures reached 101 degrees to eclipse the previous mark of 98 set in 1968 while at the Greensboro-High Point-Winston-Salem Regional Airport, temperatures climbed to 100 degrees to surpass the old mark of 97 set in 1968.

Meanwhile, Wilmington tied its previous high for this date with a 100-degree reading.

Several other cities reached the 100-degree mark. Lenoir hit 105 degrees and Fort Bragg and Goldsboro both reached 104 while Rocky Mount had 100.

A heavy thunderstorm produced

marble-sized hail and wind gusts of 40 mph in Concord in Cabarrus County late Sunday afternoon.

— Some information for this article came from Associated Press reports.