

Protecting Workers from Heat Stress

Heat Illness

Exposure to heat can cause illness and death. The most serious heat illness is heat stroke. Other heat illnesses, such as heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat rash, should also be avoided.

There are precautions your employer should take any time temperatures are high and the job involves physical work.

Risk Factors for Heat Illness

- High temperature and humidity, direct sun exposure, no breeze or wind
- Low liquid intake; previous heat illnesses
- Heavy physical labor
- Waterproof clothing
- No recent exposure to hot workplaces

Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion

- Headache, dizziness, or fainting
- Weakness and wet skin
- Irritability or confusion
- Thirst, nausea, or vomiting

Symptoms of Heat Stroke

- May be confused, unable to think clearly, pass out, collapse, or have seizures (fits)
- May stop sweating

To Prevent Heat Illness, Your Employer Should

- Provide training about the hazards leading to heat stress and how to prevent them.
- Provide a lot of cool water to workers close to the work area. At least one pint of water per hour is needed.



For more complete information:

- Schedule frequent rest periods with water breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas.
- Routinely check workers who are at risk of heat stress due to protective clothing and high temperature.
- Consider protective clothing that provides cooling.



How You Can Protect Yourself and Others

- Know signs/symptoms of heat illnesses; monitor yourself; use a buddy system.
- Block out direct sun and other heat sources.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Drink often and BEFORE you are thirsty.
- Avoid beverages containing alcohol or caffeine.
- Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothes.
- Be aware that poor physical condition, some health problems (such as high blood pressure or diabetes), pregnancy, colds and flu, and some medications can increase your personal risk. If you are under treatment, ask your healthcare provider.



What to Do When a Worker is Ill from the Heat

- Call a supervisor for help. If the supervisor is not available, call 911.
- Have someone stay with the worker until help arrives.
- Move the worker to a cooler/shaded area.
- Remove outer clothing.
- Fan and mist the worker with water; apply ice (ice bags or ice towels).
- Provide cool drinking water, if able to drink.

IF THE WORKER IS NOT ALERT or seems confused, this may be a heat stroke. CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY and apply ice as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or concerns, call OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA.

For more complete information:



U.S. Department of Labor

www.osha.gov (800) 321-OSHA