

Heat Stress Safety

Heat is a serious hazard to workers in many industries. Not only when workers are outdoors, but also during indoor activity the body builds up heat and can struggle to get rid of extra heat.

Workers need to be aware of their specific limitations and remember that sometimes their body may not cool off fast enough. It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat stress and then take the right actions to avoid serious injury.

Factors that can increase the chance of heat stress include:

- High temperature and humidity
- Not drinking enough water
- Direct sun exposure (with no shade) or extreme heat
- No air circulation or ventilation
- Physical activity without breaks

Use of bulky protective clothing and equipment



OSHA Standard Section 5(a)(1) *Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees.*

Recognize the signs of these heat stress illnesses: heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat stroke.

- **Heat cramps** are usually experienced as muscle spasms or cramping in the stomach, arms and the back of the legs or calves.
- **Heat exhaustion** symptoms include headaches, dizziness, weakness, wet skin, confusion, nausea, or vomiting.
- **Heat stroke is deadly!** Recognize heat stroke symptoms which can include red, hot and dry skin, confusion, fainting, and convulsions.

Workers should follow these emergency steps if they recognize possible heat stress:

- **Heat cramps** – drink more water and take frequent breaks, if available drink a healthy sports beverage that contains electrolytes.
- **Heat exhaustion** – 1) immediately move the affected worker from the hot area and give liquids to drink. 2) Cool the worker with cold compresses to the head, neck, and face or have the worker wash his or her head, face and neck with cold water. 3) Take the worker to a clinic or emergency room for medical evaluation and treatment.
- **Heat stroke** – if a worker is showing signs of heat stroke, especially if they stop sweating and have hot dry skin, 1) immediately call 911 or emergency services 2) move the worker to a cooler area 3) cool the worker by removing outer clothing and fanning the worker and apply wet towels or rags on their body.



TOOLBOX TALKS

Remember these tips to prevent heat stress:

- Factors that can increase the chance of heat stress include high temperature and humidity.
- Wear loose, light clothing, and avoid direct sunlight when possible.
- Workers need to start drinking water before arriving at the job site.
- Keep drinking water! Start the day out hydrated and then continues to fuel your body with water.
- **Heat stroke is deadly!** Recognize heat stroke symptoms which can include red, hot and dry skin, confusion, fainting, and convulsions.
- If a worker is showing signs of heat stroke, especially if they stop sweating and have hot dry skin, immediately call 911 or emergency services.
- Take heat stress seriously and focus on preventing heat stress.

