



Heat Related Illnesses: Risks Rise with Temperatures for Outdoor workers

When the temperature reaches 90°, you are at greater risk for heat illness. Other factors include heavy exertion, enclosed operator cabs with poor air circulation, and prolonged exposure to the sun. Certain medications also may increase your risk (check with your pharmacist to see if your medicine has that effect). If you have experienced a heat-induced illness in the past or wear heavy personal protective equipment, you are at higher risk.

The best plan is prevention. Here are some tips:

- Perform the heaviest, most labor-intensive work during the coolest part of the day.
- Slowly build up tolerance to the heat & the work activity; this usually takes up to 2 weeks.
- Use the buddy system to monitor each other in the heat
- Drink plenty of cool water - at least one small cup every 15-20 minutes. Avoid caffeine & alcoholic beverages. If you drink sports drinks, alternate with a bottle of water.
- Take frequent short breaks in cool, shaded areas — allow your body to cool down.
- Avoid eating large meals before working in hot environments

Heat stroke occurs when body temperature rises rapidly; the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down. Heat stroke can be fatal if emergency treatment is not provided.

Warning signs of heat stroke vary but may include the following: An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F, orally), red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating), rapid, strong pulse, throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, unconsciousness.

If you see any of these signs, call 9-1-1 for medical assistance and:

- Get the victim to a cool or shady area.
- Cool the victim rapidly using whatever methods you can; spray the victim with cool water from a hose; or if the humidity is low, wrap the victim in a cool, wet sheet and fan him / her vigorously.
- Continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to 101-102°F. .
- Do not give the victim fluids to drink.

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids.

Warning signs of heat exhaustion include: heavy sweating, muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, or fainting. The skin may be pale, cool, and moist. If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stroke. Seek medical attention immediately if symptoms are severe or the victim has heart problems or high blood pressure, or if symptoms worsen or last longer than 1 hour.

A "Heat Stress Safety" pocket reminder card and Heat Stress Card is available from OSHA, and can down-loaded at www.osha.gov. NIOSH also has a booklet with heat-stress prevention tips called "Working in Hot Environments."

This lesson plan is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, please contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046.