

HEAT STRESS PREVENTION

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Construction workers, who work outdoors in direct sunlight for long periods of time, are especially susceptible to the effects of excessive or repetitive heat exposure.

Heat stress is a body's reaction to a buildup of heat. It can be caused internally by muscle use and/or externally by the surrounding environment. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke can result when the body is overwhelmed by heat. Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) has developed a Summer of 2011 Awareness Campaign to focus on the prevention of heat illness in outdoor workers.

Key points that may cause heat related illnesses:

- Direct and prolonged exposure to high temperatures and humidity.
- Low fluid consumption.
- Physical exertion.
- A lack of restricted exposure to hot workplaces in order to acclimate to the heat.
- Previous over exposure to excessive heat which resulted in heat-related illness.
- Certain PPE (personal protective equipment) including clothing may increase the risk of heat exposure.

Possible Symptoms of heat stress:

- Confusion, headache, extreme weakness, severe thirst and/or irritability.
- Muscle cramps, pain or spasms in the arms or legs.
- Dizziness, rapid heartbeat, fast and shallow breathing.
- Heavy sweating and then not sweating at all, body temperature in excess of 104 degrees.
- Nausea, vomiting and/or loss of consciousness.

Protection Measures:

- Schedule work activities during cooler times of the day and/or at shaded areas of the building.
- Train workers and supervisors about the hazards of heat stress and heat stroke.
- Train workers and supervisors to recognize the symptoms of heat stress and heat stroke.
- Monitor your physical condition and that of your coworkers for signs and symptoms of heat illness.
- Drink plenty of cool water.
- Take breaks in a shaded or cool area as often as may be necessary to avoid overexposure.
- In the event that a co-worker is showing symptoms of heat related stress, get them to a cool location, cool them down, and if symptoms persist seek medical help immediately.

The best way to prevent heat illness is to take the recommended personal precautions and use measures to cool or shade the work areas whenever possible.