

It's Hot

The term “Heat Stress” refers to a group of heat related illnesses that include heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. This safety meeting will review the hazards and symptoms of working in the heat. Also, how to reduce risks of working in hot temperatures and respond to danger signals.

1. Working in Hot Conditions creates health risks

- Heat cramps occur when the body loses too much salt from heavy exertion in the heat.
- Heat Exhaustion occurs when the body can't replace fluids and/or salt lost in sweating. Perspiration in a hot environment is important, because it cools the body as it evaporates.
- Heat Stroke occurs when the body no longer sweats and holds so much heat that body temperature reaches dangerous levels. Heat stroke is a medical emergency and can lead to delirium, convulsions, unconsciousness, or even death.

2. Factors that can increase the risk of these types of heat stress include

- Physical exertion
- Being unaccustomed to working in heat
- Wearing protective clothing that traps body heat
- Age – Older people may have less body water and lower sweat gland efficiency
- Being overweight, which makes you use more energy to perform tasks
- Medications that can interfere with normal body reactions to heat

3. Take Precautions to Avoid Heat Stress when Working in Hot Conditions

- Gradually adjust to heat when new to a job or after a two-week or longer absence. It takes about five days to gradually build up acclimation spent working in heat.
- Use general ventilation, cooling fans, and evaporative cooling whenever possible.
- Shield furnaces and other heat producing equipment.
- Check for and eliminate any steam leaks.
- Plan the most strenuous work for the coolest parts of the day.
- Wear loose, lightweight. Light colored clothes. Wear a hat and use sunscreen to work outdoors.
- Drink water steadily before and during work hours. Drink about 16 ounces before starting and 5 to 7 ounces every 15 or 20 minutes during hot work.

- Eat well balanced meals, avoiding heavy or hot food, alcohol and caffeine.
- Take salt tablets to replace what's lost in perspiration, ONLY if approved by a doctor.
- Work at a steady pace, minimizing overexertion.
- Take regular breaks in a cool, well ventilated area.
- Know your own limits and ability to work safely in heat.
- Take fast action for symptoms of heat cramps, exhaustion or heat stroke.

4. Heat Stress Symptoms

- Heat Exhaustion –
 - Weakness, dizziness, sometimes nausea
 - Pale or flushed appearance
 - Sweating, moist and clammy skin
- Heat Stroke –
 - Dry, hot reddish skin, and lack of sweating
 - High body temperature and strong, rapid pulse
 - Chills
 - Confusion

5. Respond Quickly and Correctly to Heat Stress Symptoms

- Heat Cramps
 - Drink water
- Heat Exhaustion
 - Move to a cool place immediately
 - Loosen clothing and place cool wet compresses on the skin
 - Drink water or an electrolyte beverage slowly
 - Elevate feet 8 to 12 inches
- Heat Stroke
 - Move victim immediately to a cool place and call for medical help.
 - Cool the person down as much as possible while waiting for medical help.
 - Use a hose or soak clothes with water and fan the body.
 - Monitor breathing
 - Do NOT give fluids in the person is unconscious

Pay attention to your body when you work in the heat. Work at a slow, steady pace and drink plenty of water. Remember that heat stroke can be deadly and that symptoms demand immediate attention.