



DISCUSSION TOPIC: HEAT ILLNESS SAFETY TALK

With warmer weather right around the corner, we all need to be mindful of the health impacts of Heat. Heat stress creates many hazards in the workplace for those employees who must work in a hot environment. Hot environments can create indirect safety hazards such as causing employees to lose focus on their work task or becoming fatigued. Heat stress also causes more direct illnesses such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. This illness can cause damage to the brain and other internal organs. Heat stroke results from prolonged exposure to high temperatures — usually in combination with dehydration — which leads to failure of the body's temperature control system. If someone who is exhibiting signs of heat stroke is not properly treated immediately then there can be permanent health issues.

Prevention of Heat Illness:

- Provide training about the hazards leading to heat stress and how to prevent them.
- Modify work schedules and arrange frequent rest periods with water breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas.
- Gradually increase workloads and allow more frequent breaks for workers new to the heat or those that have been away from work to adapt to working in the heat (acclimatization).
- Drink plenty of fluids. Drink often and BEFORE you are thirsty. Drink water every 15 minutes.
- Keep an eye on coworkers. Monitor each other for signs of heat illness.

Signs of Heat illness:

- Fainting may be the first sign
- Extreme high body temperature.
- Hot, dry skin – an inability to cool the body through perspiration may cause the skin to feel dry.
- Increased heart rate and respiration rates as blood pressure drops and the heart attempts to maintain adequate circulation.
- Throbbing headache, nausea or vomiting due to dehydration.
- Weakness, fainting, or dizziness – especially if standing position is assumed quickly – due to low blood pressure from dehydration.
- Shortness of breath.
- Confused, hostile, or seemingly intoxicated behaviour.
- Vomiting.

What to do if you suspect heat illness:

- Call a supervisor for help. If the supervisor is unavailable, call **911**.
- Have someone stay with the worker until help arrives.
- Move the worker to a cooler/ shaded area.
- Place ice packs in their armpit and groin areas if available to help lower their core temperature.
- Provide cool drinking water, if able to drink.
- Remove outer clothing.