

TOOLBOX TALK: PREVENTING HEAT STRESS

Working Safely in Hot Environments

Most of us associate heat stress with working outdoors but it can also occur while working indoors. This can be seen in a manufacturing environment where there is no cooling available other than fans. If you do not take the right precautions when working in hot conditions, you can develop heat-related illnesses.

IDENTIFYING HEAT STRESS

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES:

Heat illness occurs when your body can not adequately cool itself through perspiration. This happens during high-temperature and high-humidity weather, especially when you perform hard physical work under these conditions. The following are heat-related illnesses:

- *Heat rash* — Heat rash consists of a red bumpy rash that can be itchy. It is usually not dangerous but it can be uncomfortable. Heat rash is a sign that hot conditions are affecting your body.
- *Heat syncope (fainting)* — Sometimes heat can cause you to faint. This is called heat syncope and usually occurs when a person is not used to working in a hot environment. It is usually not dangerous and can be prevented by moving around a little rather than standing still for long periods of time in the heat.
- *Heat cramps* — Heat cramps are painful muscle cramps caused by a loss of salt when sweating. Drinking electrolyte fluids to replace your body's salt can relieve heat cramps, but severe cramps may require a visit to a medical professional.
- *Heat exhaustion* — Heat exhaustion is more serious. It results from loss of fluid or salt, or both, through sweating. You might feel weak, dizzy, and nauseous; your skin might be clammy; and your body temperature may be above normal. To treat heat exhaustion, rest in a cool place, drink sports drinks, and remove any heavy clothing. If this doesn't help and vomiting begins or there is a loss of consciousness, call for emergency assistance immediately.
- *Heatstroke* — Heatstroke is the most dangerous type of heat illness. It occurs when the body's natural cooling processes stop working and the ill person stops sweating. Symptoms include very hot and dry skin, confusion, convulsions, seizures, and loss of consciousness. Heatstroke can cause death, so call an ambulance immediately if symptoms begin to present themselves. While you're waiting for the ambulance, try to keep the victim cool and provide fluids if he or she is conscious.

Heat Index	Risk Level
Less than 91 deg. F	Lower
91 deg. F to 103 deg. F	Moderate
103 deg. F. to 115 deg. F	High
Greater than 115 deg. F	Very high to extreme

WAYS TO PREVENT HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES:

- Drink plenty of water throughout the day. In hot conditions, you should aim for about 1 cup every 15 to 20 minutes.
- When outdoors, wear a hat and light-colored clothing
- Drink sports drinks to help replace the salt you lose when you sweat
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can cause dehydration
- Take frequent breaks in a cool, shady place
- If the temperature spikes suddenly or you are new to working in hot conditions, take more frequent breaks and gradually build up your workload while your body adapts
- If you notice yourself experiencing symptoms of heat illness, tell your supervisor and take a break in a cool, shaded area

I understand how to identify and prevent heat stress.

COMPANY: _____

DATE: _____

EMPLOYEE NAME: _____

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE: _____

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