



Heat Stress Injury Prevention

How to Prevent Injury in Adverse Heat Conditions

What is the Problem?

Workers who are exposed to extreme heat or work in hot environments may be at risk of heat stress.¹ Exposure to extreme heat can result in occupational illnesses and injuries resulting in heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, or heat rashes.² Heat can also increase the risk of injuries in workers as it may result in sweaty palms, fogged safety glasses, and dizziness.³ Burns may also occur as a result of accidental contact with hot surfaces or steam.⁴



Who is at Risk?

Workers at risk of heat stress include outdoor workers and workers in hot environments such as firefighters, divers, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) professionals, construction workers, and boiler room workers.⁵ Workers at greater risk of heat stress include those who are 65 years of age or older, are overweight, have heart disease or high blood pressure, or take medications that may be affected by extreme heat.⁶

Prevention Tips

Heat stress is, for the most part, a preventable public health problem. Reduce your risk and help treat others demonstrating heat-related stress symptoms by:

- Wear light-colored, loose-fitted clothing (i.e. cotton—if possible). Some occupations require personal protective equipment (PPE) which increases the risk of heat stress.^{7,8}
- Avoid alcoholic beverages or drinks with large amounts of sugar or caffeine.⁹
- Schedule heavy work during the coolest parts of the day.¹⁰
- Rest in a cool, shaded or air-conditioned area. Do this regularly on days of high humidity and sun.¹¹
- Drink plenty of water, enough that you never become thirsty. Approx. 1 cup every 15-20 minutes.¹²
- Call 911 or tell supervisor if necessary.¹³



Plan of the Week (POW):

Prevention of heat stress in workers is important. Employers should provide training to workers so they understand what heat stress is, how it affects their health and safety, and how it can be prevented.¹⁴ ALWAYS drink plenty of water to maintain adequate hydration and be sure to monitor your physical condition and that of your coworkers.¹⁵ Workers should avoid exposure to extreme heat, sun exposure, and high humidity when possible. When these exposures cannot be avoided, workers should be extra careful to **NEVER** consume alcohol or large amounts of caffeine or sugar as it will only further dehydrate.¹⁶

References

- 1-16 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Heat Stress. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/>. Updated 16 July 2013. Accessed 1 September 2013.

NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

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