



## **SAFETY BRIEF: PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM HEAT STRESS**

There are some critical safety topics that need to be reviewed more frequently than others and heat stress falls into that category.

As consultants, we find ourselves in a variety of work environments at our client facilities; some very hot. To add fuel to the fire so to speak, we often have to don protective clothing adding to our body's heat load. We need to be aware of heat related illnesses and take steps to protect ourselves.

Please review the following information prepared by OSHA.

### **Heat Illness**

Exposure to heat can cause illness and death. The most serious heat illness is heat stroke. Other heat illnesses, such as heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat rash, should also be avoided.

There are precautions your employer should take any time temperatures are high and the job involves physical work.

### **Risk Factors for Heat Illness**

- High temperature and humidity, direct sun exposure, no breeze or wind
- Low liquid intake
- Heavy physical labor
- Waterproof clothing
- No recent exposure to hot workplaces
- People with health conditions such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease are at a higher risk for heat-related illnesses.

### **Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion**

- Headache, dizziness, or fainting
- Weakness and wet skin
- Irritability or confusion
- Thirst, nausea, or vomiting

### **Symptoms of Heat Stroke**

- May be confused, unable to think clearly, pass out, collapse, or have seizures (fits)
- May stop sweating

### **To Prevent Heat Illness, Your Employer Should**

- Establish a complete heat illness prevention program.
- Provide training about the hazards leading to heat stress and how to prevent them.



- Provide a lot of cool water to workers close to the work area. At least one pint of water per hour is needed.
- 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).
- Routinely check workers who are at risk of heat stress due to protective clothing and high temperature.
- Consider protective clothing that provides cooling.

### **How You Can Protect Yourself and Others**

- Know signs/symptoms of heat illnesses; monitor yourself; use a buddy system.
- Block out direct sun and other heat sources.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Drink often and BEFORE you are thirsty. Drink water every 15 minutes.
- Avoid beverages containing alcohol or caffeine.
- Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothes.

### **What to Do When a Worker is Ill from the Heat**

- Call a supervisor for help. If the supervisor is not available, call 911.
- Have someone stay with the worker until help arrives.
- Move the worker to a cooler/shaded area.
- Remove outer clothing.
- Fan and mist the worker with water; apply ice (ice bags or ice towels).
- Provide cool drinking water, if able to drink.

**IF THE WORKER IS NOT ALERT or seems confused, this may be a heat stroke. CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY and apply ice as soon as possible.**



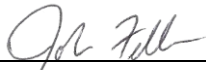
## PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM HEAT STRESS QUIZ

Reduce the risk of heat illness by taking the right precautions when temperatures begin to rise. The following questions are based on information provided by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and will test your knowledge about heat illness and how to prevent it.

1. All of the following risk factors can affect a worker's heat tolerance, except:
  - a. Not drinking enough fluids
  - b. Physical condition
  - c. Hair color
  - d. Age
  
2. Health conditions that can increase a worker's risk of heat illness include:
  - a. Diabetes
  - b. Obesity
  - c. Cardiovascular disease
  - d. All of the above
  
3. At least one pint of water per hour should be consumed in a hot environment.  
 True  
 False

**SCORE: PASS / FAIL**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date