



SAFETY SHORTS

WORKING SAFELY IN HOT CONDITIONS



Whether you work indoors or out, heat can cause serious health problems. As temperatures increase, your risk of developing heat related illnesses also increases. Most often, heat-related illnesses are preventable conditions. However, they can have significant consequences, including death, if left untreated.

Major Disorders Related to Heat Stress

There are five major disorders related to heat stress and it is possible to have more than one at a time.

1. **Heat Cramps** are characterized by spastic contractions of arms, hands, legs, and feet associated with profuse sweating.
2. **Dehydration** occurs when loss of fluids (sweating) exceeds fluid intake and the kidneys produce more urine than usual.
3. **Heat Rash** (also called prickly rash) is characterized by red bumps on the skin when wet clothing disallows evaporation.
4. **Heat Exhaustion** is generally not life threatening but is very serious. Symptoms include: sweating; cold, pale clammy skin possibly with chills; dizziness; fatigue; nausea and weakness.
5. **Heat Stroke** is a dangerous condition that should be considered a medical emergency. It is characterized by raised body temperature, rapid pulse, dry skin that is hot to touch and unconsciousness. As heat stroke can result in stroke or heart failure, persons who already have heart or circulatory problems are at an even greater risk.

Ways to Prevent Heat Stress Conditions

- **Replace Fluids** – Water is the best thing to drink. Drink water (cool, not ice cold) at least once an hour during hotter periods.
- **Take Breaks** – Breaks should be taken in a shaded place or indoors. Breaks should be more frequent the hotter it is, and the more vigorous the activity.
- **Dress Properly** – Wear light clothing that allows air movement and evaporation instead of taking off your shirt. Clothing should be loose fitting and light in color to reflect heat. Wear a brimmed hat and use sunscreen.
- **Eat Right** – Avoid big, hot meals.
- **Acclimatize** – Getting used to heat may take four to seven days of gradual increase to heat exposure. When possible allow workers to get used to heat in small doses.
- **Schedule** – Try to schedule your hot work during the cooler part of the day, when possible. For example: Mow open areas in the early morning, saving shaded areas for mid-day.

Victims of heat stroke need immediate medical attention (call 911).

While waiting for help:

1) Move the victim to a shaded cool area, if possible.

2) Lower the body temperature by applying cool compresses, wet cool cloth, or even using cool water from a hose.