

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM HEAT ILLNESS

Heat stress from exertion or hot environments places workers at risk for heat related illnesses such as heat exhaustion, heat cramps, or heat stroke.

Heat Exhaustion: The body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt, usually through sweating.

Symptoms:

- Rapid heartbeat
- Heavy sweating
- Extreme weakness or fatigue
- Dizziness
- Nausea, vomiting
- Irritability
- Fast, shallow breathing
- Slightly elevated body temperature

First Aid:

- Rest in a cool area.
- Drink plenty of water or other cool beverages.
- Take a cool shower, bath or sponge bath.

Heat Cramps: Can affect workers who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. Sweating depletes salt in the body and decreases moisture levels.

Symptoms:

- Muscle cramps, pain or spasms in the abdomen, arms and/or legs.
(Cramps can occur later in the day or at night)

First Aid:

- Stop all activity, go rest in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage, or drink water with food. (Avoid salt tablets)
- Do not return to strenuous work for at least a few hours after the cramps have subsided. If serious cramps occur, you may need to rest the next day as well.
- Seek medical attention if you have the following: heart problems, are on a low-sodium diet, or if the cramps do not subside within one hour.

Heat Stroke: A condition that occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature and can cause death or permanent disability. **Medical Treatment is needed immediately- call 911!**

Symptoms:

- High body temperature
- Confusion and/or agitation
- Loss of coordination
- Hot and dry skin
- Throbbing headache
- Vomiting
- Loss of consciousness, seizures, or coma

First Aid:

- Request immediate medical assistance - call 911.
- Move the worker to a cool, shaded area.
- Remove excess clothing – top layer shirts, belts, socks and shoes
- Pour cool water on the person

PROTECT YOURSELF

Avoid heavy exertion, extreme heat, sun exposure and high humidity when possible. When these cannot be avoided, take the following preventative steps:

- Monitor your physical condition and that of your coworkers for signs or symptoms of heat illness.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing such as cotton. (Avoid non-breathable synthetic clothing)
- Gradually build up to heavy work; acclimation is very important.
- Schedule heavy work during the coolest parts of the day.
- Take more breaks when doing heavier work, and in high heat and humidity. (Take additional rest and cooling breaks in the shade or a cool area.)
- Drink clean, cool water frequently. Drink enough water that you never become thirsty.
- Be aware that protective clothing or personal protective equipment may increase the risk of heat-related illnesses.
- **REPORT all heat illness to your supervisor immediately; never ignore symptoms and use first aid treatments when necessary.**