

WORKING SAFELY OUTDOORS

PREVENTING HEAT STRESS



This talk discusses the hazards of heat stress and provides tips for outdoor workers to stay safe when working in hot conditions.

Material to have on hand: Local weather forecast and/or current heat index

Points to consider:

- What are the symptoms of heat stress?
- What can you do to prevent heat stress?
- What first-aid measures should you take if you or a coworker shows signs of heat stress?

TALK

Working outdoors in hot weather can be uncomfortable. But did you know it can also be hazardous? If you don't take the right precautions when working in hot conditions, you can develop heat-related illnesses. These can range from mild annoyances, such as heat rash, to life-threatening heatstroke.

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

Heat illness occurs when your body can't adequately cool itself through sweating. This is most likely to

happen during high-temperature, high-humidity weather, especially when you perform hard physical work under these conditions. You can be at risk of the following 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, and it 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 you can prevent it by moving around a little rather than standing still for long periods of time in the heat.
- **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** is more serious. It results from the loss of fluid or salt, or both, through sweating. You might feel weak, dizzy, and nauseous; your skin might become 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 you or a coworker start vomiting or lose consciousness, call for emergency assistance immediately.

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Talk Date: _____

Attendees: _____

Location: _____

Supervisor/ _____

Comments: _____

Presenter: _____

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- **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 you or a coworker shows symptoms. While you're waiting for the ambulance, try to keep the victim cool and provide fluids if he or she is conscious.
- All of these heat-related illnesses can be prevented by taking some very simple steps when working in hot conditions:
 - Drink plenty of water throughout the day. In hot conditions, you should aim for about 1 cup every 15 to 20 minutes.
 - 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 both 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.