



7 Minute Safety Talks

Working in the Heat

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Recognize the hazards and symptoms of heat related illness.
 - Reduce risks of working in hot temperatures and respond to danger signals.
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TALKING POINTS

1. Working in hot conditions, indoors or outdoors, creates a health risk.

- Heat cramps occur when the body loses too much salt from heavy exertion in the heat.
- Heat exhaustion occurs when the body can't replace fluids and/or salt lost in sweating.
 - Perspiration in heat is important, because it cools the body as it evaporates.
- Heatstroke occurs when the body no longer sweats and holds so much heat that body temperature reaches dangerous levels.
 - Heatstroke is a medical emergency and can lead to delirium, convulsions, unconsciousness, or even death.

2. Factors that can increase the risk of these types of heat stress include:

- Physical exertion
- Being unaccustomed to working in the heat
- Wearing protective clothing that traps body heat
- Age
 - Older people may have less body water and lower sweat gland efficiency.
- Being overweight, which makes you use more energy to perform tasks
- Medications that can interfere with normal body reactions to heat.

3. Take precautions to avoid heat stress when working in hot conditions.

- Gradually adjust to heat when new to a job or after a 2-week or longer absence
 - Take about 5 days to gradually build up time spent working in heat.
 - Use general ventilation, cooling fans, and evaporative cooling whenever possible.
 - Shield furnaces and other heat producing equipment.
 - Check for and eliminate any steam leaks.
 - Plan the most strenuous work for the coolest parts of the day.
 - Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
 - Wear a hat and use sunscreen to work outdoors.
- Drink water steadily before and during work in heat
 - Drink about 16 ounces before starting, and 5 to 7 ounces every 15 or 20 minutes during hot work.
- Eat well-balanced meals, avoiding heavy or hot food, alcohol, and caffeine
- Take salt tablets to replace what's lost in perspiration, if approved by a doctor
- Work at a steady pace, minimizing overexertion
- Take regular breaks in a cool, well-ventilated area.
- Know your own limits and ability to work safely in the heat
- Take fast action for symptoms of heat cramps, exhaustion, or heatstroke

4. Be alert to heat stress symptoms.

Heat exhaustion symptoms include:

- Weakness, dizziness, sometimes nausea
- Pale or flushed appearance
- Sweating, moist, and clammy skin



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Heatstroke symptoms include:

- Dry, hot reddish skin, and lack of sweat
- High body temperature and strong, rapid pulse
- Chills
- Confusion

4. Respond quickly and correctly to heat stress symptoms.

Heatstroke is a medical emergency that can be fatal. Act immediately.

- Move victim to a cool place, and call for medical help.
- Cool the person down as much as possible while waiting for medical help
 - Use hose or soak clothes with water and fan the body.
 - Monitor breathing. Don't give fluids if the person is unconscious.

Heat exhaustion requires fast response to prevent worse problems.

- Move to a cool place immediately.
- Loosen clothing and place cool wet compresses on the skin.
- Drink water or an electrolyte beverage slowly.
- Elevate feet 8 to 12 inches.

If you experience heat cramps:

- Drink water

DISCUSSION

Asks participants to discuss the jobs they perform that could create heat stress risks and specifically how they would reduce those risks.

CONCLUSION

- Pay attention to your body when working in the heat
- Work at a slow, steady pace and drink plenty of water. Remember that heatstroke can be deadly and that symptoms demand immediate action.