

STAYING SAFE WHILE WORKING IN THE HEAT

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Properly preparing to work in heat and humidity can provide protection from potentially deadly conditions. A heat-related illness can start slowly — you may not even realize it's happening — and it can quickly get worse if it's not treated. Knowing the risks and warning signs can go a long way in helping to keep you and your co-workers safer on the job.



HEAT EXPOSURE RISKS:

Heat risks can be sinister in that even mild exposure can leave you feeling ill, and not everyone reacts in the same way to rising temperatures. When your body heat rises and doesn't cool down in an appropriate manner, it can lead to serious problems. Exposures can include:

- Physical activity
- Air temperature
- Humidity
- Sunlight
- Improper clothing
- Heat sources (e.g., machinery, ovens, furnaces, road surfaces, unventilated buildings)
- Individual and/or personal risk factors¹



GENERAL KNOWLEDGE FOR HELPING PREVENT HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES:

- If you are not acclimated to working in the heat, remember to take it slow. Building heat tolerance, also known as heat acclimatization, is necessary to help introduce your body to working in hot environments.¹
- Heat exposure can occur both indoors as well as outdoors, and can occur at any time of the year if the conditions are right.
- Wear loose-fitting, breathable clothing that is light-colored, and understand that certain types of protective clothing or PPE may make heat illness more likely.
- Consume adequate amounts of water and sports drinks to stay hydrated.
- Work shorter shifts, take frequent breaks, and learn to identify heat illness symptoms.
- Take frequent rests in cool, shaded areas.
- If symptoms are severe, immediately cool an overheated employee down and call 911.²

KNOWING THE WARNING SIGNS:



Heat-related illnesses can occur quickly, and symptoms may be non-specific. Any unusual symptoms can be a sign of overheating, and it is important to know what these symptoms look like in order to recognize when an employee may need medical assistance.² Several symptoms of heat-related illnesses include:

- Confusion
- Slurred speech
- Fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Heavy sweating
- Muscle pain or spasms
- Fainting
- Dizziness
- Elevated body temperature
- Rapid heart rate

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¹ <https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure> Occupational Safety and Health Administration – Safety and Health Topics – Heat. Accessed 4/11/22.

² <https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/illness-first-aid> Occupational Safety and Health Administration – Safety and Health Topics – Heat-Related Illnesses and First Aid. Accessed 4/13/22.