



Safety Alert

Heat Related Illness

Northern Region

Long days translate in to ample opportunities to continue operations for lengthy periods in the sun. Working in a hot outdoor summer environment can pose a notable risk for heat illness. Managing your work tempo and body heat is the shared responsibility between your supervisor, co-workers and **YOURSELF!** Nobody truly knows your limits better than the original owner of the equipment that is you. Communicating your limits and establishing expectations is the first step in mitigating heat related mishaps. Numerous cases of heat related illness have been reported this season.

HEAT RELATED ILLNESS IS PREVENTABLE. Heat induced illness is a result of the body's inability to cope with heat. This condition can manifest itself as a minor symptom or a life-threatening emergency. Be informed of potential factors affecting physical activity during hot weather. While recognition and treatment are important, prevention is the key.

Factors Leading to Heat Stress: High temperature, humidity, direct sun, heat, limited air movement, physical exertion, poor physical condition, some medications and inadequate tolerance for hot workplaces can be contributing factors. Becoming acclimated to working in a hot environment takes time. If a person is physically fit, it takes four to eight days to adapt to current conditions. This acclimation process continues for several weeks. Fatigue, energy drinks or alcohol consumption can delay the acclimation process and may put a person at risk for a heat illness. Individuals not acclimated or physically fit can suffer heat induced illness sooner than others. However, physically fit individuals who do not drink enough water and work in heat can suffer a heat-induced illness as well.

It is important to note that a temperature above 95^o F with any amount of humidity will put you in the "high" zone. Increased hydration and frequent breaks are required for any physical activity performed during "high" periods. If possible, seek shade during breaks and stay hydrated.

Water is the primary form of fluid replacement. Remember to hydrate before, during and after strenuous work activities, good hydration starts before you start work. Before engaging in work activities drink 20 ounces of cool water or sports drink. During the work period take frequent rest breaks and drink 8 ounces of water every 15 minutes (1 Qt. /hour). If cold water is available it is preferred. Consider a carbohydrate/electrolyte sports beverage such as Gatorade™ or equivalent for a portion of your fluid replacement. This will help retain fluids, maintain energy, and electrolyte levels. Avoid "energy" beverages such as Red Bull™, Rock Star™ etc. These beverages contribute to dehydration. Keep track of your urine output and remember the rule of thumb "if you haven't urinated in three hours you may be starting to dehydrate". Also, urine color is an indicator, if your urine is getting dark (Drink More Water!) Regardless of the job being performed heat induced illness prevention is a concern. Be able to recognize the symptoms of heat illness in yourself and others. **If you feel overexerted – STOP!** Hydrate and try to lower your heart rate and cool your body immediately. Many times feeling thirsty means that you could be dehydrated.

"We want every employee of the Region to return home safely each day."

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