

Sizzling Hot Temperatures

Watch out for Heat Related Illnesses

It's hot and humid, and the summer temperatures are climbing! Unless you're in an air-conditioned environment, you're most likely sweating and uncomfortable. You're probably tiring more easily, and you may be working and moving more slowly, too. What you really need to be concerned about is the heightened risk of heat-related illnesses.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) data, 230 heat-related deaths have occurred from 2003 – 2009 with 81 (40%) of these fatalities in the construction industry. Over that same time period, 15,370 heat-related injuries/illnesses requiring days away from work have occurred with 4,110 (27%) of these injuries/illnesses in the construction industry. It is necessary for employers and their employees to be able to recognize heat-related symptoms and know what to do to combat heat-related illnesses.

- **Heat cramps** are painful muscle spasms in arms, legs, or abdomen (intestines) caused by losing body salt while sweating.
 - ✓ **What to do:** Have worker rest in shady cool area. Hydrate by drinking water, clear juice or a sport or vitamin drink that contains electrolytes.
- **Fainting** may be a problem in the heat, especially if you spend a lot of time standing in one place.
 - ✓ **What to do:** Sit or lie down with feet slightly elevated. Also moving around, rather than standing still, reduces the risk of fainting in the heat. Keep hydrated with clear liquids.
- **Heat exhaustion** can make you feel weak and possibly dizzy and/or nauseous. Other symptoms include headache, chills, clammy skin and profuse sweating.
 - ✓ **What to do:** Rest in a cool spot, preferably sit or lie down with feet slightly elevated and drink plenty of fluids. If your condition doesn't improve, seek medical attention. Following an incident take it easy for a few days and reduce your pace of activity—especially if excessive heat continues to be a factor.
- **Heat stroke** is life-threatening. Emergency medical attention is required. A victim of a heat stroke stops sweating, causing the body to overheat. Symptoms include hot and flushed skin, very high body temperature, confusion and possibly followed by loss of consciousness.
 - ✓ **What to do:** Call **911**. While waiting for the EMT's to arrive, move the victim to a cool place, sponge with cold water, apply ice packs or cold drink cans or immerse in cold water. Provide water or clear fluids only if the person is conscious.

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