



SafetyAlert

We're Serious About Safety

BEAT THE HEAT THIS SUMMER

With the warm summer months upon us, employers with workers involved in outdoor activities should be cautiously aware of the dangers of heat stress. Outdoor professionals performing construction, refining and hazardous waste site activities may be subject to excessive heat exposure. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued a warning that employees performing job duties, which require the use of non-breathable protective clothing, are among those at risk for heat-related health disorders.

The combination of high temperatures and high humidity greatly increases the threat for heat stress. When the body is unable to cool itself through sweating, serious heat illnesses may occur. The most severe heat-induced illnesses are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. If actions are not taken to treat heat exhaustion, the illness could progress to heat stroke and possible death.

In the US: According to the National Centers for Health Statistics (NCHS), 7046 deaths were attributed to excessive heat exposure from 1979 - 1997, or an average of 371 deaths occurred per year. Heatstroke and deaths from excessive heat exposure are more common during summers with prolonged heat waves. For example, *during the heat wave of 1980 (a record year for heat), 1700 deaths were attributed to heat, compared to only 148 deaths the previous year. Persons older than 65 years accounted for at least 44% of*

cases. The numbers published by the NCHS are believed to grossly underestimate the true incidence of heat-related deaths because death rates from other causes (eg. cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease) also increase during the summer, and especially during heat waves.



WARNING SIGNS:

*Headaches
Dizziness / Lightheadedness
Weakness
Mood Changes (irritable, confused)
Queasiness, Vomiting
Decreased or Dark Colored Urine
Fainting
Pale and Clammy Skin*

PREVENTION CHECKLIST:

- Drink plenty of water before you get thirsty - Re-hydration drinks such as Gatorade are beneficial.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar.
- Use cooling fans and stay out of direct sunlight.
- Take short breaks in cooler areas of the workplace.
- Wear lightweight clothing.
- Perform the heaviest work during the coolest part of the day.
- Know that equipment such as respirators or work suits can increase heat stress.
- Certain medications and heat do not mix. Check with your health care provider.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE CHECKLIST:

- Move person to cool, shady area. DO NOT leave the person alone.
- Lay them on their back with legs raised approximately 6-8 inches. If the person is sick to their stomach, lay them on their side.
- Loosen and remove any heavy clothing.
- Have the person drink cool water (small cup every 15 minutes) if they are not feeling too sick to their stomach.
- Try to cool the person by fanning them. Cool the skin with a cool spray mist of water or wet cloth.
- If the person does not feel better in a few minutes. call 911 for emergency help.

For additional information, please visit the following websites:

www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatstress

www.okstate.edu/ehs/links/heat.htm

www.safetyline.wa.gov.au/pagebin/workhazd0002.htm

Beacon Mutual offers a variety of training opportunities for Employees, Supervisors and Managers. Please check our seminar schedule for more information.

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MAY 2007

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