

## Outdoor workers should watch out for heat-related illnesses

As the weather warms up, people who work outdoors should take extra caution to avoid heat-induced illnesses such as heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Workers should be aware of the warning signs of these illnesses and know what to do if someone becomes ill.

### Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is caused by dehydration which can occur from sweating, and not drinking enough fluids, or not taking in enough salt. Symptoms of heat exhaustion may include dizziness, weakness, irritability, confusion, vomiting, fainting, decreased or dark colored urine, and pale clammy skin. You should act immediately if someone shows signs of heat exhaustion. If left untreated, heat exhaustion may advance to heat stroke. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration recommends taking the following actions if someone shows symptoms of heat exhaustion:

- Move the victim to a cool, shaded area to rest. Do not leave the person alone. If the person is dizzy, lay them on their back with their feet raised 8-10 inches. If the person is nauseous, lay them on their side.
- Loosen and remove any heavy clothing.
- Have the person drink a cup of cool water every 15 to 20 minutes (unless sick to the stomach).
- Cool the person's body by fanning or spraying with a cool mist of water or applying a wet cloth to their skin.
- Call 911 if the person does not feel better in a few minutes.

### Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is the most serious of the heat-induced illnesses. If left untreated, heat stroke can be fatal. Heat stroke occurs when the body's ability to regulate its core

temperature shuts down. Symptoms of heat stroke include hot red skin, lack of sweat, confusion, seizures, or loss of consciousness. OSHA recommends taking the following actions:

- Immediately call 911 for emergency help.
- Move the victim to a cool, shaded area. Do not leave the person alone. Lay the victim on their back or side. If the person is nauseous, lay them on their side.
- Loosen and remove any heavy clothing.
- If the person is alert enough to drink, have them drink a cup of cool water every 15 minutes (unless sick to stomach).
- Cool the person's body by fanning or spraying with a cool mist of water or applying a wet cloth to their skin.
- Place ice packs under the armpits and groin area.

### How to Avoid Heat-Related Illnesses

To avoid heat-induced illnesses when working outside:

*Replace fluids:* Drink plenty of cool water—about a cup every 20 minutes. Although water is best, fruit juice or sports drinks may be substituted. Avoid alcohol or caffeinated beverages which dehydrate the body.

*Dress Properly:* Wear light, loose-fitting, breathable clothing. Wear a hat with a broad rim.

*Eat right:* Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Avoid eating large hot meals before working in hot environments.

*Take breaks:* Take frequent, short breaks in cool, shaded areas to allow your body to cool down.

For more information, contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.

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