

## Safety Message

# Heat Illness Awareness and Prevention

As California says goodbye to the once much needed rain (rain, rain and rain) and 3 years of drought conditions, warmer days are near, with high heat days not far away. The local news services have been reporting we may experience serve heat days (over 100 degrees) this month and next.

Heat Illness is a serious condition but is preventable in most cases.



## Heat-related illnesses

Heat Illness is defined as “exposure to abnormal or prolonged amounts of heat and humidity without relief or adequate fluid intake”. There are various types of heat-related illness, all can have serious consequences.

Workers who are overweight, or who preform rigorous task are also more susceptible. Certain P.P.E. such as FR clothing add to the increase risk of a heat related injury,

Additionally, people with chronic health problems (diabetes, kidney and heart problems), or those who take certain medicines may be more susceptible to heat-related illnesses. . If you have these, it would be good to talk to your doctor about the work you do and ask whether there are any special precautions you need to take.

Heat-related injuries are generally classified into three classifications:

- Heat cramps
- Heat exhaustion
- Heat stroke

## Heat cramps

Heat cramps are the mildest form of heat injury and consist of painful muscle cramps and spasms that occur during or after intense exercise and sweating in high heat.

First Aid: Move the person to a cool place, give him/her electrolyte-carbohydrate solutions to drink, and lightly stretch and massage the cramped area.

## Heat exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is more severe than heat cramps and results from a loss of water and salt in the body. It occurs in conditions of extreme heat and excessive sweating without adequate fluid and salt replacement. Heat exhaustion occurs when the body is unable to cool itself properly and, if left untreated, can progress to heat stroke.

First Aid: Move the person to a cooler environment, loosen clothing, and apply a wet towel. If the person is conscious give small amounts of cool water, if conditions worsen call emergency medical services (9-1-1).

## Heat Stroke

Heat stroke, the most severe form of heat illness, occurs when the body's heat-regulating system is overwhelmed by excessive heat. It is a life-threatening emergency and requires immediate medical attention.

First Aid: In cases of suspected Heat Stroke, immediately Call 911. Move the person to a cool, shady area, preferably an air-conditioned room or vehicle. Give them small amounts of cool (not Ice) water. Keep them cool and calm until emergency services arrives.

## Heat-Related Injuries Prevention

Heat-Related Injuries prevention is as simple as following a few basic guidelines:

- Understanding how excessive exposure to heat can affect you
- Knowing what the symptoms of heat related illness are
- Staying Hydrated, avoid drinks with caffeine or large amounts of sugar.
- Taking appropriate rest breaks

Acclimation to the heat is important as well. If you haven't worked in hot weather for a week or more, your body needs time to adjust. You may need to take more breaks when performing strenuous work.

## “Stop - Think - Act”

Keep in mind any heat injury is serious but it is also preventable. Hydration is important, as well as time exposed to moderate to intense heat. A general recommendation is to drink one quart of cool water per hour and take frequent rest breaks, preferably in a shaded area. You should report any heat symptoms you are having to both the crew around you and the on-site supervisor. And most importantly, you should know what to do in an emergency for both you and your fellow co-workers.

**911** Please note that calling from a cell phone, particularly on a construction site or rural area, the caller needs to know that address of the location to give to the 911 dispatcher.

CalOSHA has made several changes to the Heat Standard (CalOSHA T8 CCR §3395), Additional resources and heat illness publications can be found online at this link:

<http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/HeatIllnessInfo.html>

## Sign-in Sheet

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