

Heat Stress Safety Topic

This section address general awareness, symptoms, and prevention of heat stress in the workplace.

General

Heat exhaustion can occur to an individual that is subjected to hot environments/high temperatures and fail to consume enough fluids or salts. Heat exhaustion is a serious issue as it can possibly lead to heat stroke – a life threatening condition. Heat stroke happens when the individual's body is unable to regulate its core temperature. It is then that the human body can no longer cool itself through perspiration and is unable to rid excess heat. Employees working in hot environments must be aware of and recognize symptoms of heat stress disorder.

Symptoms

- Heat Cramps – painful spasms of the muscles; caused when individuals consume large quantities of water but fail to take in enough salt. Sore or tired muscles are especially susceptible.
- Heat Exhaustion – moist, clammy, pale skin; profuse sweating; extreme weakness or fatigue; dry mouth; dizziness; fast pulse; rapid breathing; muscle cramps and nausea.
- Heat/Sun Stroke – high body temperature (104° F or higher); lack of sweat; mental confusion, delirium, or hallucinations; deep breathing and rapid pulse; hot, dry, red or mottled skin; and dilated pupils.

If it is believed an individual is experiencing heat stroke contact emergency personnel at once.

Prevention

- Acclimatization – Adjust yourself to the heat through short exposure periods followed by longer exposure until your body is accustomed to the heat. It may take 5-7 days of hot weather exposure before the body undergoes changes that make

heat more bearable.

- Drink lots of Water/Liquids – Replenish the fluid that your body is losing through sweating. Not only water, but critical electrolytes such as sodium, potassium and calcium are lost through sweating.
- Do not ignore possible symptoms of heat stress disorders.