

Working in extreme heat Picture This

Working in the *Heat*

Employers can take measures to protect workers from heat stress disorders by avoiding heavy exertion tasks, extreme heat, sun exposure, and high humidity when possible.

- Provide plenty of water.** Workers should drink a cup every 15 to 20 minutes, thirsty or not, and avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Gradually increase work load and heat exposure** to give workers time to adjust to working in the heat.
- Provide breaks to rest and cool off,** preferably in a cool area, in the shade or in air-conditioned buildings or vehicles.
- Schedule less strenuous tasks** between 11am-4pm when the sun's rays are strongest.
- Set up shade structures.** Umbrellas, buildings, and trees can also shield workers from the rays of the sun. Note: you can still get sunburn on a cloudy day.
- Protective clothing or personal protective equipment** may increase heat retention. Be sure to plan work and breaks accordingly.
- Make sure outdoor workers wear** light, loose-fitting clothing, UV-rated sunglasses and a wide-brim hat. Provide sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 and UVA/UVB protection, and allow workers to re-apply every 2 hours and after sweating.
- Provide education and training** about heat-related illnesses. People are generally unable to notice their own heat stress-related symptoms and depend on their co-worker's ability to recognize these symptoms and seek timely first aid and medical help.

When is hot too hot?

Legislation is not always specific about the acceptable range for temperature conditions at work, especially when working outdoors. In some cases, for specific circumstances, the Threshold Limit Values for heat stress from the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists have been formally adopted as occupational exposure limits in some jurisdictions, while others use them as guidelines.

As the temperature or heat burden increases, workers may feel:

- Increased irritability
- Loss of concentration and ability to do mental tasks
- Loss of ability to do skilled tasks or heavy work

heat exhaustion

- nausea
- headache
- heavy sweating
- cold, pale, moist skin
- muscle cramps
- dizziness
- weakness
- fatigue

heat stroke

- nausea
- hot, dry skin
- loss of consciousness
- confusion
- strange behaviour
- high body temperature
- headache

Move to a cooler, shaded location.

Remove as much clothing as possible (including socks and shoes).

Cool down by applying cool wet cloths or ice to the head, face or neck. Spray with cool water.

Drink water, clear juice or a sports drink.

Provide medical aid if the person does not start to feel better.

Stay with the person until help arrives.

Call 911 immediately
This is a medical emergency. Stay with the person until help arrives.

CCOHS.ca
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Source: <https://www.ccohs.ca>