Safe & Well Waypoint

Occupational Health & Safety Talks

protecting the worker through safe practices & internal responsibility

HEAT STRESS

When your body's cooling system can't keep up with the heat, you dehydrate and your temperature rises above 38°C. You are susceptible to heat-related illnesses such as:

- heat rash (plugged sweat glands)
- heat cramps (sweating has caused salt loss)
- heat exhaustion
- heat stroke (very serious— can cause death)

There are two serious heat illnesses: heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

1. HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion is when the body cannot keep blood flowing both to vital organs and to the skin for cooling.

Symptoms

- weakness, feeling faint
- headache
- breathlessness
- nausea or vomiting

2. HEAT STROKE

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. You can die from it. Your body has used up all its water and salt and cannot cool itself. Your temperature rises to dangerous levels.

Symptoms

- confusion and irrational behaviour
- convulsions
- unconsciousness

Treatment

If a co-worker shows symptoms of heat stroke, you should act fast.

1. Call the local emergency number or get the worker to a hospital.
2. Take aggressive steps to cool the worker down (immerse in a tub of cool water or cool shower, spray with a hose, wrap in cool, wet sheets and fan rapidly).
3. If the worker is unconscious, don't give anything to drink.

Here's how to avoid heat stress in the first place:

1. Wear light, loose clothing that allows sweat to evaporate. Light-coloured garments absorb less heat from the sun.
2. Drink small amounts of water (8 oz) every half hour. Don't wait until you're thirsty. Take advantage of the water fill stations located in the Atrium lobby and the Administration Building (level 2).
3. Avoid coffee, tea, beer, or other drinks that make you go to the bathroom frequently.
4. Avoid eating hot, heavy meals that increase your body temperature.
5. Remember that your physical condition can reduce your ability to deal with the heat. Age, weight, fitness, health conditions (heart disease or high blood pressure), recent illness, or medications can all affect your ability to withstand high temperatures.