



The Heat Is On! *Protect yourself from heat illness*

As temperatures rise, so does the risk of heat illness. The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) wants to remind all employers and employees that heat illness can be deadly. This risk is generally the highest for people who work outdoors, and that is why California's first heat illness prevention standard was developed.

Heat illness is preventable

The best defense against heat-related illnesses and fatalities is prevention. The new Heat Illness Prevention Standard, Title 8, California Code of Regulations, Section 3395, requires all employers with outdoor worksites to take 4 basic steps to prevent heat illness:

1. Provide heat illness prevention training to all employees, including supervisors.
2. Provide enough fresh water so that each employee can drink at least 1 quart per hour and encourage them to do so.
3. Provide access to shade for at least 5 minutes of rest when an employee believes he or she needs a preventative recovery period. You should not wait until you feel sick to do so!
4. Develop and implement written procedures for complying with the heat illness prevention standard.

Adjusting to the heat is important

One component of heat illness prevention is acclimatization, which is properly adjusting to physical activity in hot weather. The body needs time to adapt to increased heat and humidity, especially if engaged in heavy physical exertion. Typically, people need from 4 to 14 days in order to fully adjust to significant increases in temperature.

Cal/OSHA data reveals that most of the workplace deaths related to heat illness last year, involved new employees who were on the job only one to four days and they were unaccustomed to working in hot weather. While the heat illness prevention standard calls for employers to train employees on the importance of acclimatization, it is up to employers to determine what acclimatization procedures they will use. The best strategy is to allow employees, and especially new ones, to adjust to hot weather by gradually increasing to a full work shift and pace.

On very hot days, other good strategies include timing the shift so that more work can be done during the cooler parts of the day, increasing the number of water and rest breaks, and using a "buddy system" so that workers and supervisors can monitor each other. Also, employees should be reminded of the cooling benefits of wearing loose fitting, light-colored clothing and a wide-brimmed hat, whenever feasible.



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According to a study by Cal/OSHA, 84% of the heat illnesses occurred during heat waves.

96 % of those who succumb to the heat suffer from dehydration.

SHADE

If you or your employees work outdoors, consider some easy-to-assemble portable sources of shade: such as umbrellas, canopies, or other temporary structures. Buildings, canopies, and trees can qualify for shade as long as they block the sunlight and are either ventilated or open to air movement.

Under the new Cal/OSHA standard, an employee working outdoors who wants to cool off must be provided with shade for at least 5 minutes at a time. Shade must be accessible to employees at all times for these heat illness recovery periods. According to the standard, shade means blockage of direct sunlight. To judge whether or not shade is sufficient, ensure that objects do not cast any shadows in the shaded area and that there is sufficient space for the employee to be comfortable.

Shade is not adequate when the temperature in the shaded area prevents cooling. You must avoid sources of shade such as metal sheds or parked cars that are hot from sitting in the sun; however a vehicle running air conditioning can qualify as effective shade.

WATER

The new Cal/OSHA standard also requires employers to provide their employees who are working outdoors with one quart of potable, fresh, and cool water per person, per hour. In case studies, Cal/OSHA data revealed that, even though drinking water was present at most worksites, 96% of those who succumbed to the heat suffered from dehydration. Therefore, it is critical to keep drinking water accessible and remind workers to drink it frequently.

In addition to encouraging employees to drink water frequently, employers need to be on the lookout for work situations that interfere with access to water especially during a heat wave. Water is a key preventative measure against heat illness.

Videos, training materials,
& more online at:
www.ycparmia.org

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Recognizing the symptoms of heat illness and providing an effective response requires promptly acting on early warning signs. Common early symptoms and signs of heat illness include headache, muscle cramps, and unusual fatigue. However progression to more serious illness can be rapid and can include unusual behavior, nausea, vomiting, weakness, rapid pulse, excessive sweating or hot dry skin, seizures and loss of consciousness.

Any of these symptoms require immediate medical attention!

If you suspect heat illness, you must call 911. No employee with any of the symptoms of possible heat illness noted above should be sent home or left unattended without medical assessment and authorization.