

Manager/Supervisor Risk Management

#138– 3/28/13

A twice weekly e-mail training for YCPARMIA members

TOPIC: SAFETY – HEAT ILLNESS PROTECTION

An entity's Heat Illness Prevention Plan supplements the entity's IIPP to meet its responsibility of providing a safe working environment. In 2005, Cal/OSHA implemented heat illness regulations that require employers to implement a program that protects their workers from illness and injury while working in hot areas.

Awareness and respect for the danger of heat is probably the central element. The concepts are common sense; extra care has to be taken by individuals working in a high heat environment to avoid heat related illness. In general terms, the State requires that the following elements be included in the employer's written program:

- Employers need to provide and encourage the worker's frequent drinking of water.
 - The water must be readily accessible.
- Provide rest breaks in cooler or shaded areas with the opportunity to drink water.
- Manage workers so that they become acclimated to heat, and to continually monitor the temperature/threat.
- Have a written procedure for responding to emergencies.
- Train all workers and supervisors in the program requirements.

Maybe the most important issue and difficulty in heat illness prevention is that the employer's supervisor has the responsibility to protect the employees from their own actions or poor judgment. In hot conditions, an employee can miss or discount the warning signs, and fail to appreciate the danger they face. Workers and their supervisors need to be trained to recognize the three major forms of heat illness:

- Heat cramps: the most common illness, and often occurs after work;
- Heat exhaustion: more serious with the body starting to shut down;
- Heat stroke: life threatening.

They need to be trained in how to respond to each of these illnesses while erring on the side of caution. Work priorities and expectations need to change or adapt to the weather conditions.

Note: As with all safety issues, it is not enough to have this program/plan; it must be trained to and consistently followed. A sample plan is available on the YCPARMIA website.

Next Topic: Safety – Lockout/Tagout