

DC 37 SAFETY AND HEALTH FACTSHEET

HEAT STRESS

FACTS AT-A-GLANCE

Occupational Factors that May Contribute to Heat Illness include:

- High temperatures and/or humid environment
- Low fluid consumption
- Direct sun exposure with no shade or shelter
- Limited air movement (no breeze or wind)
- Physical exertion
- Use of bulky or heavy protective clothing and equipment
- The four most common types of heat illnesses to be aware of are heat rash, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat stroke.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- Dress appropriately for working in the heat.
- Change face coverings when they become wet or soiled.
- Take breaks in a cooler environment.
- Watch out for each other.

Many DC 37 members are required to work in hot environments for long periods of time. Whether indoors or outdoors, exposure to excessive heat or strenuous work in a hot/humid environment can lead to heat-related illnesses. Learn how to protect yourself and be alert to the signs and symptoms of heat illnesses. Heat-related illnesses should be taken seriously, as they pose significant health hazards and can even lead to death.

- A person becomes vulnerable to heat illness when they can no longer maintain their normal body temperature.
- Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related health illness. Heat stroke is a true medical emergency and can lead to death. Workers who are experiencing heat stroke may present with **confusion, loss of consciousness and seizures**. Since the body's sweating mechanism breaks down, the member may not be sweating.
- **SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION.** For a worker exhibiting signs of possible heat stroke, call 911. Until medical help arrives, move the worker to a cool, shady area and remove as much clothing as is practical. Cool the member with ice if possible, circulate the air, place cold towels on the skin or soak the member's clothing with cold water. Place cold wet cloths or ice on the head, neck, armpits and groin.
- Heat exhaustion is the next most serious heat-related illness. Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion include **headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, irritability, confusion, thirst and heavy sweating**. Get out of the hot environment and drink water. Apply cold compresses to the head, neck and armpits. Get evaluated at an emergency room or walk-in clinic right away.
- Sweating causes the body to lose fluids and electrolytes, which can lead to **muscle pain** known as Heat Cramps. Members experiencing heat cramps should replace lost fluids by drinking water and/or electrolyte-replacing drinks (i.e. sports drinks). Seek medical attention if cramping persists.
- The most common heat-related health issue is Heat Rash. Heat rash is caused by sweating and looks like a **cluster of red pimples or small blisters**. Members with heat rash should be moved to a cooler environment. Keep the rash dry and never apply creams or ointments to a heat rash.

TIPS FOR PREVENTING HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

- Hydrate before, during and after work. Drink 1 cup of cool water every 15-20 minutes, even if you are not thirsty.
- Avoid energy drinks, caffeine and alcohol.
- Ease into work. Most fatalities from heat illness happen during the first week of work.
- New and returning workers need to build tolerance to heat (acclimatize) and take frequent breaks. OSHA recommends following the 20% Rule:
 - On the first day, work no more than 20% of the shift's duration at full intensity in the heat. Increase the duration of time at full intensity by no more than 20% a day until workers are used to working in the heat.
- Take breaks in cool shaded or air conditioned areas. Take enough time to recover from heat given the temperature, humidity and conditions.
- Dress for the heat. Wear a hat and clothing that is light-colored, loose-fitting and breathable.
- Try to schedule the most strenuous work for the coolest part of the day.
- Look out for co-workers and know warning signs such as
 - Headache or nausea
 - Weakness or dizziness
 - Heavy sweating or hot, dry skin
 - Elevated body temperature
 - Thirst
 - Decreased urine output
- Take action
 - Provide water or electrolyte-replacing sports drinks
 - Move to cooler area
 - Remove unnecessary clothing
 - Cool skin with cold water or ice and a fan if available
 - Do not leave a person suffering a heat-related medical condition alone
 - Seek medical attention when needed. **When in doubt, call 911**

Click the link below to download the CDC's OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool smartphone app:

<https://www.osha.gov/heat/heat-app>

For more information, visit: www.osha.gov/heat

Sources: National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health; US Dept. of Labor/OSHA

WATER

REST

SHADE