

Handling Hot Environments



Common Heat-Induced Problems & Symptoms

Heat stroke causes the body to break down under heat stress and stop sweating. A heat stroke victim's skin is hot, dry and usually red or spotted. Body temperature is 105 degrees or higher and rising. The victim may be mentally confused, convulsing or unconscious. The accepted first aid is to remove them to a cooler area and soak their clothing with cool water. Fan the victim to increase the cooling. It's critical to get professional medical treatment as soon as possible.

Heat Exhaustion is caused by the loss of fluid in sweating, sometimes by the loss of salt or by both. The worker with heat exhaustion still sweats, but also experiences extreme

fatigue, nausea or headache. Treatment is simple, have the victim rest in a cool place and give plenty of liquids, particularly cool water.

Fainting from heat environments is rare, but can occur. If an employee does faint, due to heat, the best thing to do is remove that person to a cooler area, lay them down to allow blood to return to the brain more quickly. After gaining consciousness, have the employee move around to increase blood circulation.

So, what can we do to prevent these illnesses? In the course of a day's work, people can perspire as much as 3 gallons of body fluid. More times than not, dehydration and loss of salt occurs from this fluid loss. Employees need to drink as much water as they lose. Don't always depend upon thirst to tell you it's time to take a drink of water. In hot environments, employees should drink water every 15 or 20 minutes.

More Prevention Measures

- ◆ Reduce the physical demands of work, e.g., excessive lifting or digging with heavy objects;
- ◆ Provide recovery areas, e.g., air-conditioned enclosures and rooms;
- ◆ Use shifts, e.g., early morning, cool part of the day, or night work;
- ◆ Use intermittent rest periods with water breaks;
- ◆ Use relief workers;
- ◆ Use worker pacing;
- ◆ Assign extra workers and limit worker occupancy, or the number of workers present, especially in confined or enclosed spaces; and
- ◆ Schedule hot jobs for the cooler part of the day.

