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USACE Safety Gram

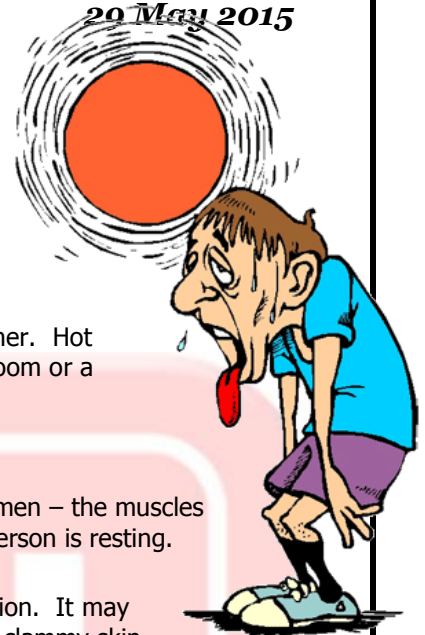


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Warming Up For the Future

Climate changes attributed to increasing “greenhouse gases” in the Earth's atmosphere may cause more cases of heat illness deaths in the future. While not as dramatic as hurricanes or earthquakes, heat waves are a leading cause of deaths from natural disasters in the United States. Heat can cause you to become inattentive, short-tempered, dizzy, and slow. All of these conditions can cause you to work in an unsafe manner. Hot conditions can be caused by the weather or by the work situation itself, such as a laundry-room or a foundry. When the atmosphere is humid, the effects of the heat are compounded.



Here are the warning signals of heat illness:

- ◆ **Heat Cramps.** Heat cramps affects muscles such as those in the arms, legs and abdomen – the muscles which have been used while working. These cramps may occur after work, when the person is resting. Heat cramps are a signal that the body has lost too much salt through sweating.
- ◆ **Heat Exhaustion.** Heat exhaustion is a serious condition that needs immediate attention. It may have any or all of these symptoms: A feeling of exhaustion, nausea, dizziness, pale and clammy skin, quick pulse, and low blood pressure. Heat exhaustion is also a warning that the mechanism which controls heat for the body has become seriously overtaxed. Heat stroke may follow if heat exhaustion is not treated.
- ◆ **Heat Stroke.** Heat stroke is a serious matter and it can be fatal. It occurs when the body's heat control mechanism simply shuts down. Perspiration stops and the body temperature rises. The heart pounds and the skin becomes flushed and hot. This condition is a medical emergency and must be treated immediately.

How can you protect yourself from the ill effects of heat stress?

- ◆ When the hot weather hits, expect everyone to be sluggish for a few days until they adjust. Get used to working in the heat gradually. Alter work routines to reduce heavy exertion in the heat of the day.
- ◆ Take frequent rest breaks when working in hot conditions. These breaks can consist of moving to a cooler area or switching to lighter work for awhile.
- ◆ Drink plenty of water and drink it often. Beverages such as coffee, cola and beer don't replenish the water in your system; they actually deplete it. Keep an emergency supply of water on hand for this and other emergencies.
- ◆ Take it easy on yourself. Avoid strenuous activities in the heat of the day, especially if you are not accustomed to them. Schedule heavy work and fitness workouts for the cooler hours.
- ◆ Take it easy on the power grid, too. Avoid unnecessary use of electricity while air conditioners are running. A power failure during a heat wave can result in more deaths.
 - ◆ Hot weather is especially hard on the young, the old and those in ill health. Keep young children as cool and comfortable as you can.
 - ◆ Dress lightly, in layers so that you can subtract or add clothing as the temperature changes. Be sure to shade the skin against the sun. Remind your workers frequently to protect themselves from sunburn by covering up with lightweight clothing and using sunscreen.
 - ◆ Watch each other for signs of heat illness. Mild cases can be treated by moving the person to a cool area and supplying water to drink. Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition which calls for immediate medical help.



Every summer many areas undergo periods of seriously hot weather. Make sure you know how to avoid heat illness at work and off the job.