

Working Safely in Hot, Humid Conditions

The month of August is here. Some call these the dog days of summer. The cooler temperatures of autumn are not far away. However, warm and humid days may still lie ahead. To help outdoor employees combat and survive the heat and humidity in the workplace, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently issued some guidelines.

OSHA, which is operated by the Department of Labor, is lead by administrator John Henshaw. Henshaw explains that heat, humidity and working outdoors can lead to fatalities if simple precautions are not taken. It is up to employers to make sure their workers follow them. The two main forms of heat stress are heat exhaustion, usually from dehydration, and heat stroke. The ability to prevent and/or recognize these warning signs can make a difference in saving lives.

In addition to the heat stress card (see chart), which explains heat stroke and exhaustion in detail, OSHA offers tips on protecting yourself from the sun and outdoors. Using the following tips can reduce your exposure to hazards while working outdoors.

Sun

Sunlight produces UV radiation, which causes premature aging of the skin, cataracts and skin cancer. If you

burn easily or are fair-skinned, here's how to limit your risk in the sun.

- Wear a hat with a wide brim to cover up your neck, ears and nose.
- Use sunscreen of at least SPF 15.
- Wear UV-resistant sunglasses.
- The most intense UV rays are between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., so try to avoid outdoor activities during this timeframe.

Heat

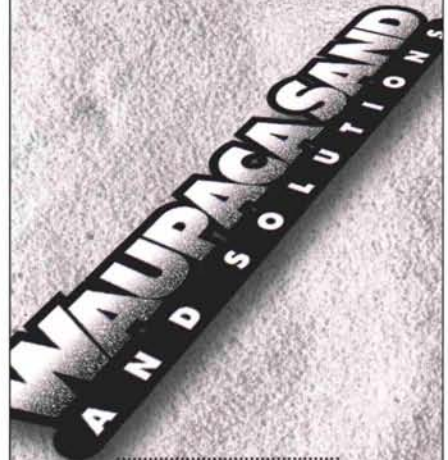
Working outdoors in high humidity and warm temperatures causes you to sweat. If your body overheats to the point that it does not sweat, seek medical attention.

- Drink water. You should drink eight 16-ounce glasses of water a day during normal conditions. More is required if you work outdoors.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. Cotton is good material that breathes easily.

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- Take short, frequent breaks in the shade.
- Eat small meals before working.
- Avoid caffeine or alcohol during these periods.
- Equipment like respirators and suits causes your body temperature to rise.

Working outdoors in the sun and the heat is a necessity in our business. While most are enjoying their

summer outdoors playing golf (we hope), exercising or spending time with family and friends, we are working to provide and maintain, with professionalism, the finest conditions for golf. Regardless of Mother Nature, superintendents nurture and foster the hallowed grounds on which they are employed. Now is the time of year when the temperature and humidity are turned up. It is our

responsibility to ensure the safety of our workers and their health. Workplace safety adds value to the workplace, to property and to life. Remember, SAFETY FIRST!



References

- OSHA Web site: www.osha.gov
- Dr. Gary Erisman. Lecture Notes. Illinois State University.

The Heat Equation

HIGH TEMPERATURE + HIGH HUMIDITY
+ PHYSICAL WORK = HEAT ILLNESS

When the body is unable to cool itself through sweating, serious heat illnesses may occur. The most severe heat-induced illnesses are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. If left untreated, heat exhaustion could progress to heat stroke and possible death.

Relative Humidity	Temperature
70%	100°F / 37.8°C
60%	95°F / 35°C
50%	90°F / 32.2°C
40%	85°F / 29.4°C
30%	80°F / 26.7°C

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Heat Exhaustion

What are the symptoms?
HEADACHES; DIZZINESS OR LIGHTHEADEDNESS; WEAKNESS; MOOD CHANGES SUCH AS IRRITABILITY, CONFUSION, OR THE INABILITY TO THINK STRAIGHT; UPSET STOMACH; VOMITING; DECREASED OR DARK-COLORED URINE; FAINTING OR PASSING OUT; AND PALE, CLAMMY SKIN

What should you do?

- Act immediately. If not treated, heat exhaustion may advance to heat stroke or death.
- Move the victim to a cool, shaded area to rest. Don't leave the person alone. If symptoms include dizziness or lightheadedness, lay the victim on his or her back and raise the legs 6 to 8 inches. If symptoms include nausea or upset stomach, lay the victim on his or her side.
- Loosen and remove any heavy clothing.
- Have the person drink cool water (about a cup every 15 minutes) unless sick to the stomach.
- Cool the person's body by fanning and spraying with a cool mist of water or applying a wet cloth to the person's skin.
- Call 911 for emergency help if the person does not feel better in a few minutes.

Heat Stroke—A Medical Emergency

What are the symptoms?
DRY, PALE SKIN WITH NO SWEATING; HOT, RED SKIN THAT LOOKS SUNBURNED; MOOD CHANGES SUCH AS IRRITABILITY, CONFUSION, OR THE INABILITY TO THINK STRAIGHT; SEIZURES OR FITS; AND UNCONSCIOUSNESS WITH NO RESPONSE

What should you do?

- Call 911 for emergency help immediately.
- Move the victim to a cool, shaded area. Don't leave the person alone. Lay the victim on his or her back. Move any nearby objects away from the person if symptoms include seizures or fits. If symptoms include nausea or upset stomach, lay the victim on his or her side.
- Loosen and remove any heavy clothing.
- Have the person drink cool water (about a cup every 15 minutes) if alert enough to drink something, unless sick to the stomach.
- Cool the person's body by fanning and spraying with a cool mist of water or wiping the victim with a wet cloth or covering him or her with a wet sheet.
- Place ice packs under the armpits and groin area.

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