Sun Safety

WORKING IN THE HEAT

The return of the midnight sun means that many of us will take advantage of the great outdoors between now and the end of August. Whether you work outdoors or simply enjoy the sun for recreational purposes, you need to consider your health and safety when exposed to the sun. If you are an employer, make sure you are educated on sun safety and protection from heat illness.

What is heat illness?

There are five types of heat illness:

1. **Heat Stroke** – The most serious of the heat illnesses. It is caused by body-heat overload.
2. **Heat Edema** – Results in swelling of the hands, feet, and ankles.
3. **Heat Cramps** – Results in painful cramps that occur in frequently used muscles (i.e. arms, legs, or stomach).
4. **Heat Exhaustion** – Caused by excessive loss of water and salt.
5. **Heat Rash** – Results in a red bumpy rash that is extremely itchy.

What are the symptoms of heat illness?

- Dizziness or fainting
- Nausea or vomiting
- Headache
- Extreme thirst
- Heavy sweating
- Decreased urination, and dark yellow urine
- Red, hot, dry skin
- Convulsions
- Confusion
- Rapid breathing and heartbeat
- Weakness

What should I do for myself or others who are at risk of heat illness?

- Stay hydrated! Drink water every 15 minutes, even if you are not thirsty.
- Wear a hat and light-coloured clothing.
- Watch out for signs of heat illness in others.
- Rest in the shade.
- Report any symptoms of heat illness immediately.

What should employers do to ensure workers are safe?

- Train workers to recognize signs and symptoms of heat stroke and heat exhaustion.
- Provide workers with cool, fresh water to drink.
- Provide a shaded area for workers to cool down.
- Schedule outside work or rigorous work to be done during cooler times of the day.
- Prepare a heat stress plan to prevent heat illness.

For more information, refer to WSCC's Code of Practice on Thermal Conditions.
See: WSCC Occupational Health and Safety Regulations Section 74(3). Thermal Conditions.

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