

# Guidelines for Working in Hot Weather

Working in hot weather is unavoidable, and it can be dangerous. Heat related illnesses can occur when the body's core temperature rises even a few degrees above normal. Knowing the symptoms of heat related illnesses and how to respond to them can save a life.



## Potential Hazards

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Body temperatures above 105° can be life threatening. Heat rash, heat fatigue, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke are all conditions that need attention. Heat stroke, in particular, is a life threatening condition that requires professional medical treatment as quickly as possible. Even mild cases of heat stress can move on to more serious levels if left untreated, so never ignore symptoms. If you experience dizziness, rapid heartbeat, diarrhea, nausea, cramps, throbbing headache, dry skin (no sweating), chest pain, great feeling of weakness, mental changes, breathing problems, or vomiting, seek medical attention as quickly as possible.

## Heat Rash, Heat Fatigue, and Heat Cramps

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These conditions are common results of heat stress. Getting into a cooler environment usually alleviates the symptoms. Symptoms of heat fatigue may include impaired performance in mental or skilled motor functions. Heat cramps, resulting from inadequate fluid replacement, appear as muscle spasms or stomach cramps. Heat cramps may be caused by either too much or too little salt. Both can result in an electrolyte imbalance, so never take salt tablets unless directed by your physician.

## Heat Exhaustion

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Heat exhaustion is indicated by headache, nausea, lightheadedness, weakness, thirst, or giddiness. The victim may sweat profusely and exhibit a clammy skin. Fainting is a common side effect, often with no warning. Anyone suffering from heat exhaustion should be removed from the hot environment and given fluid replacement.

## Heat Stroke

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The most serious form of heat stress is heat stroke. This is a potentially fatal emergency, so immediate treatment is important. It occurs when the body's ability to regulate its temperature completely shuts. Primary symptoms are confusion; irrational behavior; unconsciousness; convulsions; hot, dry skin usually (but not always) accompanied by a lack of sweating; and abnormally high body temperature. Professional medical treatment must be obtained immediately. Until professional help arrives, place the victim in a cool area and remove outer clothing. Wet the victim's skin and increase air movement to provide evaporative cooling. Replace fluids as soon as possible.

## To Avoid Heat Stress

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Give your body a chance to adapt to heat. Wear cool, loose fitting clothing. Drink at least 8 ounces of liquid every 20-30 minutes to replace fluids. Do not use thirst as a guide; you may be in the early stages of dehydration before you become thirsty. Avoid alcohol, which acts as a diuretic and results in further water loss. Have a cool place to take breaks. If possible, there should be air circulation, such as from a fan

## Questions?

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If you have any questions regarding safely working in hot environments, please call the Department of Environmental Health and Safety at 8-8182.