



Toolbox Talks

Heat Stress



Heat is a serious hazard to construction workers. Not only when workers are outdoors but also during indoor activity the body builds up heat and can struggle to get rid of extra heat. Workers need to be aware of their specific limitations and remember that sometimes their body may not cool off fast enough. It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat stress and then take the right actions to avoid serious injury.

OSHA Standard 1926.21(b)(2) says that the employer shall instruct each employee in the recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions and the regulations applicable to his work environment to control or eliminate any hazards or other exposure to illness or injury.

Factors that can increase the chance of heat stress include:

- High temperature and humidity
- Not drinking enough water
- Direct sun exposure (with no shade) or extreme heat
- No breeze or wind
- Physical activity without breaks
- Use of bulky protective clothing and equipment

Water. Rest. Shade. California's State OSHA program has created a great way to remember three important ways to **prevent heat stress**.

Water – workers need to **start drinking water before arriving at the job** site. This is a great way to get the body hydrated and ready for hard work.

Keep drinking water! Start the day out hydrated and then continue to fuel your body with water.

If the temperature is high and the humidity is high OSHA recommends about **four cups of water per hour**.

Rest – during periods of high heat and high humidity **short breaks in the shade** are a great way to let the body release some of that extra heat.

RECOGNIZE AND TREAT HEAT STRESS SYMPTOMS:

- **Heat cramps** are usually experienced as muscle spasms or cramping in the stomach, arms and the back of the legs or calves. **Drink more water, or a healthy sports drink with electrolytes, and take frequent breaks.**
- **Heat exhaustion** symptoms include headaches, dizziness, weakness, wet skin, confusion, nausea, or vomiting. **Immediately move affected worker indoors or to the shade and give liquids to drink. Apply cold compresses or cold water to the head, neck and face. Seek medical attention.**

