

Worker Safety

## U.S. Department of Labor Reminds Employers of Important Protections for Working Safely in Summer Heat

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WASHINGTON, DC – Throughout much of the U.S., high temperatures and humidity in the summer season can create hot and hazardous working conditions, both outdoors and indoors. The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reminds employers of their duty to protect employees from the risks and dangers of heat exposure. OSHA reminds employers of the following ways to mitigate heat hazards:

- Water. Rest. Shade. Employers should encourage workers to drink water every 15 minutes, and take frequent rest breaks in shaded or air conditioned areas;
- New and temporary workers are most at risk to the hazards of excessive heat. Monitor new employees and offer them extra protections from elevated heat conditions until they are fully acclimatized. Create a ***plan to protect new workers from heat illness***;
- Strenuous physical exertion increases body heat and workers' risk of heat-related illness. Evaluate the combination of body heat and environmental heat to determine if heat stress is a potential hazard. OSHA recommends ***assessment tools that are based on levels of physical activity and wet bulb globe temperature*** readings;
- Recognize that serious heat-related illnesses can occur on normal summer days, when temperatures are not extreme. A good rule of thumb is that ***workers need additional protective measures whenever the Heat Index is 80 degrees Fahrenheit or above***;
- Indoor industries, such as kitchens, laundries, and warehouses, can also become dangerously hot. OSHA offers a ***list of those industries at high risk***;
- Increase ventilation, use cooling fans, and whenever possible schedule work at a cooler time of the day. OSHA's heat page includes a ***list of best practices***;
- Ensure adequate ***planning and supervision*** to keep workers safe in the heat; and
- Train workers on the hazards of heat exposure and how to prevent illness.

***OSHA's Occupational Heat Exposure page*** explains the symptoms of heat illness, first aid measures to provide while waiting for help, proactive engineering controls and work practices to reduce workers' exposure to heat, and training.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to help ensure these conditions for America's

working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit **[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)**.

The mission of the Department of Labor is to foster, promote and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

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