

Personal Protective Equipment

What PPE Do You Need for Warm Weather?

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During the winter months, safety managers are concerned with managing cold stress. Come summer, workers and managers face the opposite phenomenon – heat stress.

Heat-related disorders such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke can impair workers unless safety measures are implemented. Starting with frequent breaks, having weather-adequate PPE, and staying hydrated, there are many simple steps to prevent heat-related illnesses.

Jana Bacinska, Advanced User Experience Designer at Honeywell, explains how weather-appropriate PPE can help reduce health and safety risks related to heat.

Here are Jana Bacinska's simple rules for workers' protection in hot environments:

- 1. Wear loose-fitting clothing.** It's best to avoid tight-fitting clothes, as these can constraint movement and restrict ventilation and sweat evaporation. When workers are exposed to the sun, long loose pants, as well as long-sleeved tops, are preferred to avoid harmful UV rays.
- 2. Reduce the number of layers** to a minimum and try to wear a moisture-wicking base layer that absorbs sweat and helps to regulate skin temperature. This is valid especially in very humid environments because there is a decrease in sweat evaporation and it's very uncomfortable. This can be achieved by wearing high-performance synthetic materials which absorb the sweat and allow quicker drying. Natural Merino wool is also a great option, as it can absorb up to 30% of its weight in moisture. The great advantage of Merino compared to synthetics is that it is odor resistant. However, for extremely humid environments, Merino works the best if blended with synthetic materials, to allow quicker drying.
- 3. Use more breathable materials.** The *Miller® H500 Harness*, for example, features improved comfort around the waist, back, and shoulder area, and significantly reduces heat and sweat build-up with the addition of perforated foam material in combination with a mesh for cushioning that provides breathability. This means less water vapor resistance and it keeps workers drier and cooler.
- 4. Workers should protect themselves from UV rays.** They should **use sunscreen and reapply regularly** during the shift on all the exposed skin areas including the face, neck, ears, and forearms in case of rolled-up sleeves.
- 5. Completely avoid dark clothing** and dark colors in general. It makes a real difference to wear lighter colors that do not absorb sunlight.
- 6. Workers should also use goggles with UVB/UVA protection.** For example, the *Uvex Stealth®* offers protection from chemical splash and impact with U6 grade-level filtering 99.9% UVB/UVA protection. Also, as sometimes goggles or glasses get fogged up during heat waves, the *Uvex Stealth®* sports the Hydroshield AF coating, offering a consistent fog-free time of 90x longer than the majority of other anti-fog products.
- 7. In case they must protect their head wearing hard hats,** workers should make sure that **the hard hat has some ventilation integrated**. It should also be lighter in color, lightweight, and feature a more breathable material. The *Honeywell North Zone™ Hard Hat Full Brim* is perfect for reflecting sunlight as it comes in lighter colors and has a moisture-wicking breathable sweatband, which is easily

removable, washable, and replaceable.

8. For footwear, Honeywell expert's recommendation is to try and avoid heavy, leather styles, and **choose more lightweight and more breathable shoes**. "We have recently launched Honeywell Agile, a sporty, flexible, lighter, and more comfortable range, influenced by sports shoes. This ergonomic and athletic range is featuring breathable stretched textile combined with knitted upper materials and 3D mesh lining, as well as an antibacterial insole that prevents bad odor, making it an excellent choice for hot weather. Athletic textile footwear provides much more breathability and reduces the weight," says Bacinska. And it's also important to wear socks to absorb the sweat and avoid getting sores or related injuries on the feet.

If you are looking for footwear designed with the ladies in mind, choose Honeywell Cocoon Evo. The line is created especially for women, with a combination of quality leather and mesh that guarantees increased breathability and comfort during warm weather. Moisture is absorbed by the shoe's lining and then evaporates, which provides all-day comfort for the wearer.

9. During the summertime, workers should **clean their PPE often**. Sweat is aggressive, and it may discolor the yarns and eventually weaken them. It is also corrosive and can destroy any metallic parts affected. When reusing sweaty clothing without washing it, the bacteria and mildew rub into the skin and it can trigger skin inflammation and yeast infection, not to mention an unpleasant odor.

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