



Managing heat stress in the workplace

Prevention tips to keep workers safe in hot environments

As temperatures rise, so does the risk of heat-related illness on the job. Whether working outdoors in forestry, or indoors in a paper products plant, workers can quickly become vulnerable to heat stress if proper precautions are not in place.

Heat stress occurs when the body cannot cool itself effectively. Hot temperatures, humidity, physical exertion, radiant heat from equipment or the sun, heavy clothing, and personal protective equipment can all contribute to dangerous working conditions. Without prevention measures, heat stress can lead to dehydration, heat exhaustion, or life-threatening heat stroke.

Common warning signs of heat stress include:

- Dizziness or fainting
- Headache or nausea
- Muscle cramps
- Heavy sweating
- Weakness or fatigue
- Confusion or unusual behaviour
- Dark-coloured urine, a sign of dehydration

How to protect yourself against heat stress

Sometimes it's difficult to self-recognize heat stress. Here are some things you can do to beat the heat and stay safe:

- Stay fit
- When possible, avoid working in hot areas and in full sun
- Take frequent breaks
- Use sunblock with at least 15 SPF and re-apply every two hours
- Increase fluid intake
- Avoid alcohol and excessive caffeine
- Reduce activity when exposed to heat
- Use the buddy system to watch for symptoms
- Increase salt intake (if doctor approves)

How employers can protect workers against heat stress

- Train workers in heat stress awareness and first aid
- Provide drinking water
- Provide rest breaks and air-conditioned rest areas
- Have hydration stations available and encourage routine use of them
- Indoors, provide fans for air movement
- Use machines to reduce physical demands of work
- Schedule most strenuous work to cooler times of the day
- Measure daily Humidex ratings and have a Humidex Heat Stress Response Plan
- Have a heat stress prevention program specific to your workplace

If someone shows signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke, move them to a cool area immediately, loosen clothing, provide cool water if they are conscious, and seek medical attention.

Heat-related illnesses are preventable. With awareness, training, and proper controls, workplaces can help keep workers safe in hot environments.

For more information, visit [health and safety resources related to heat stress](#).