STAY HEALTHY IN THE HEAT

Hot weather is here. When you are working outside, extreme heat is not only uncomfortable…it can kill. Last year, thousands of workers in the United States got sick from exposure to heat on the job, and more than 30 workers died. These illnesses and deaths were preventable.

BEAT THE HEAT: THREE SIMPLE STEPS

Heat illness can be prevented. Remember these three things: water, rest, and shade.

- WATER: Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day. Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink water. A good rule of thumb is to drink 4 cups of water every hour. It is best to drink a small amount of water every 15 minutes.

  Remember: Caffeine and Alcohol are diuretics – They strip the body of fluids. If you drink coffee in the morning and/or alcohol last night you MUST replenish the body with lots of fluids. Even if you only had a few beers last night – You need to drink several glasses of water before you start your day.

- REST: Rest breaks help your body recover.

- SHADE: Resting in the shade or in air-conditioning helps you cool down.

MORE STEPS TO REDUCE YOUR RISK

Here are some other ways you can prevent illness from the heat:

- Report symptoms of heat illness right away.
- Wear light-colored cotton clothing.
- Wear a hat.
- Wear sunscreen to prevent sunburn.
- Watch out for your coworkers.
HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS: KNOW THE SIGNS

It’s important to know the signs of heat-related illness—acting quickly can save lives.

- **Heat stroke** is the most serious heat-related illness. Usually, when your body builds up heat, you sweat to get rid of the extra heat. With heat stroke, your body can’t cool down. The symptoms include: confusion, fainting, seizures, very high body temperature and hot, dry skin or profuse sweating. **HEAT STROKE IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. CALL 911** if a coworker shows any signs of heat stroke.

- **Heat exhaustion** happens when your body loses too much water and salt through sweating. Symptoms may include: headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, thirst and heavy sweating.

- **Heat fatigue**, **heat cramps**, and **heat rash** are less serious, but they are still signs of over exposure to heat.

If you feel any of the symptoms of heat-related illness, or you see a coworker in distress, **tell your supervisor right away**. An employee experiencing the above symptoms should be taken to the UNC Hospitals Emergency Room as soon as possible. Contact the University Employee Occupational Health Clinic at 6-9119 if you have any questions.

**OSHA HEAT SAFETY TOOL**

If you have a smart phone, download the OSHA Heat Safety Tool app. The App allows workers and supervisors to calculate the heat index for their worksite, and, based on the heat index, displays a risk level to outdoor workers. Then, with a simple "click," you can get reminders about the protective measures that should be taken at that risk level to protect workers from heat-related illness—reminders about drinking enough fluids, scheduling rest breaks, planning for and knowing what to do in an emergency, adjusting work operations, gradually building up the workload for new workers, training on heat illness signs and symptoms, and monitoring each other for signs and symptoms of heat-related illness.

**CONTACT ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Departments with employees who normally work outdoors or in unconditioned indoor environments need to address heat stress in their Hazards Management Plan by including written safe job procedures appropriate to their work. Supervisors are to provide heat stress training for these employees. For assistance, please contact the UNC Department of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) at 962-5507 or by sending an email via [http://ehs.unc.edu/feedback.shtml](http://ehs.unc.edu/feedback.shtml). EHS can also suggest appropriate controls to reduce your risk of heat-related illness. For more information, visit [http://ehs.unc.edu/healthy/index.shtml](http://ehs.unc.edu/healthy/index.shtml).