

## TOOLBOX TALK

# Heat Stress Safety

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Heat exposure kills an average of 40 workers and causes over 3,300 serious injuries every year in the U.S. alone (BLS). Construction workers make up only 6% of the workforce but account for over one-third of all heat-related deaths. Heat stroke can kill in minutes.

**40**

Average heat-related workplace deaths per year

**3,300+**

Heat injuries per year with days away from work

**100%**

Heat-related deaths are preventable

## 5 Keys to Preventing Heat Stress

Water, rest, shade — the foundation of heat illness prevention:

**1**

### WATER — DRINK BEFORE YOU'RE THIRSTY

Drink 1 cup (250 ml) every 15-20 minutes. By the time you feel thirsty, dehydration has already begun.

**2**

### REST — TAKE FREQUENT BREAKS

Rest in shade or air-conditioning every hour. Increase break frequency as heat index rises above 90°F (32°C).

**3**

### SHADE — PROTECT FROM DIRECT SUN

Provide shade structures, cooling stations, or air-conditioned areas. Direct sun adds 15°F (8°C) to heat index.

**4**

### ACCLIMATIZE NEW WORKERS

New or returning workers need 7-14 days to adjust. Start with 20% workload, increase 20% each day.

**5**

### KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

Train everyone to recognize heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Act immediately — seconds count.

## Hot Day Checklist

- Is cool drinking water readily accessible to all workers?
- Are shaded rest areas or cooling stations set up?
- Has the heat index been checked and communicated today?
- Are new workers on an acclimatization schedule?
- Does everyone know the signs of heat stroke and what to do?

## Know the 3 Stages of Heat Illness

### Heat Cramps

Muscle cramps in legs, arms, or stomach. Caused by salt loss from sweating. Move to shade, drink water.

**FIRST AID:** Rest in cool area. Drink water with electrolytes. Gently stretch cramped muscles. Do not return to heat.

### Heat Exhaustion

Heavy sweating, weakness, nausea, dizziness, cool/clammy skin. This is a WARNING — heat stroke is next.

**FIRST AID:** Move to shade immediately. Remove excess clothing. Apply cool water to skin. Fan the worker. Call for help.

### Heat Stroke

MEDICAL EMERGENCY. Body temp above 40°C (104°F). Confusion, slurred speech, hot/dry skin, unconsciousness.

**FIRST AID:** Call 911 IMMEDIATELY. Cool the worker by any means. Ice packs on neck, armpits, groin. Do NOT give fluids.

## Common Mistakes That Kill

- ✗ Waiting until thirsty to drink — dehydration starts long before thirst kicks in
- ✗ "I'm used to the heat" — acclimatized workers still get heat stroke in extreme conditions
- ✗ Ignoring early symptoms — heat cramps and exhaustion are warnings that heat stroke is coming
- ✗ Not adjusting work for new employees — 50-70% of heat deaths occur in the first few days on the job
- ✗ Relying on energy drinks instead of water — caffeine and sugar accelerate dehydration

## Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ Water, rest, shade — say it, remember it, do it. These three words save lives
- ✓ Watch your buddy — heat impairs judgment, your coworker may not realize they're in danger
- ✓ Schedule heavy work for early morning or late afternoon — avoid peak heat hours 10am-3pm
- ✓ Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing — dark colors absorb more heat
- ✓ Heat stroke = 911 immediately — do not wait, do not try to treat it yourself, cool and call

## Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. What is the heat index forecast for today and this week?
2. Where are the water stations and shade areas on our site?
3. Do we have any new workers who need acclimatization?
4. Can you name the three stages of heat illness?
5. What would you do if a coworker collapsed and had hot, dry skin?

### TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance sheet attached:  Yes