

## **OSHA Guidelines on Protecting Workers from the Effects of Heat**

As summer approaches, it is important to consider how working in hot environments can impact your workforce. When the human body is unable to maintain a normal temperature, heat illnesses can occur and may result in death. It is important to consider that hot work environments may exist both indoors and outdoors. The following provides some valuable information designed to prevent worker illnesses and death caused by heat stress.

### **What is Heat Illness?**

The following illnesses may result from exposure to heat at the workplace:

- *Heat Stroke* is the most serious heat-related health problem. Heat stroke occurs when the body's temperature regulating system fails and body temperature rises to critical levels (greater than 104°F). This is a medical emergency that may result in death.
- *Heat Exhaustion* is the next most serious heat related health problem. The signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion are headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, irritability, confusion, thirst, heavy sweating, and a body temperature greater than 100.4°F.
- *Heat Cramps* are muscle pains usually caused by the loss of body salts and fluid during sweating.

### **Key elements of a Heat Illness Prevention Program include:**

- a point person designated to oversee the Heat Illness Prevention Program;
- hazard identification;
- water/rest/shade;
- acclimatization;
- modified work schedules;
- training;
- monitoring for signs and symptoms; and
- emergency planning and response.

OSHA, CDC, and NIOSH have developed a mobile app (for iOS and Android) to assist with heat illness prevention. The **OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool** can be accessed [here](#). 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 workers. The app can provide protective measures that should be taken at various risk levels to protect workers from heat-related illnesses (e.g., reminders for 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, monitoring for signs and symptoms, etc.).

If you have any related questions, or any other safety or environmental needs, please contact *Tim Schwendeman* at 330-854-9066 x12.