



Construction Risk Advisor

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How to Protect Employees From Heat-related Illness

As summer temperatures start to rise, so does the risk of your employees experiencing heat-related illness at the construction site. In fact, recent research from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) found that thousands of employees become ill from work-related heat exposure every year—with the most severe cases resulting in fatalities.

Despite these numbers, you can help protect your employees from heat-related illness this summer by implementing a variety of preventive precautions and construction site safeguards.

ACCLIMATE YOUR EMPLOYEES

Especially if your employees aren't used to regularly working in high temperatures, it's crucial to have acclimatization protocols in place. Doing so will help your staff build a tolerance to the heat and reduce their vulnerability to heat-related illness over time.

Common acclimatization protocols include gradually increasing employee workload and the amount of time spent working in the heat over a seven-day period, as well as offering additional rest breaks during each shift.

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ENSURE ADEQUATE TRAINING

In addition to utilizing proper acclimatization protocols, it's also important to educate your employees on the risks of heat exposure and highlight steps that they can take to protect themselves through a heat-related illness training program. Be sure to provide employees with the following best practices in your training program:

- Dress appropriately to protect yourself from the heat. This includes wearing light-colored clothing and safety glasses with UV protection. Also, don't forget to wear sunscreen.
- Keep yourself hydrated throughout the day by drinking plenty of water or sports drinks that contain electrolytes. When taking a rest break, try to do so in the shade or an air-conditioned area.
- Know the initial signs of heat-related illness and pay attention to your co-workers to help detect early symptoms. These signs include excessive sweating, disorientation, stumbling, slurred speech and unresponsiveness. If a co-worker displays these symptoms, inform your supervisor.

HAVE A RESPONSE PLAN

Apart from these preventive measures, ensure you have a plan for how to respond to a heat-related illness incident. This plan should detail how to recognize and report that an employee is experiencing a heat-related illness, how to take care of the ill employee, and when to contact emergency services or take the employee to the hospital. Practice this plan regularly with staff to make sure that everyone is prepared.

By following these precautions, you can help keep your workers cool this summer and prevent costly heat-related illness incidents at the construction site. Click [here](#) for further guidance from OSHA on protecting employees from heat-related illness.