Toolbox talk: heat stress and working in hot weather

29 CFR 1926.51, 1926.21, 1910.141, 1926.50, 1910.151

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

Have you ever felt dizzy, sick or confused while working in the heat, and what did you do about it?

Why it matters

Heat illness can turn deadly, and it can come on fast. Someone with heat stroke may not realize anything is wrong, so the crew has to watch out for each other. The good news is that heat illness is preventable with water, rest, shade and a plan.

Key points

1. **Know what heat stress is**
   Your body cools itself by sweating and by sending blood to your skin. Heat stress builds up when heat, humidity, direct sun, still air, hard work or heavy clothing and PPE add heat faster than your body can get rid of it. When that happens, your core temperature rises and heat illness can set in.

2. **Drink water before you are thirsty**
   In construction, an adequate supply of drinking water must be provided at every place of employment. Drink small amounts often through the whole shift, not just at lunch. Keep the water cool, clean and close to where people are working.
   29 CFR 1926.51(a)(1)

3. **Rest in shade or a cool area**
   Take breaks out of the sun or in a cooler area, and take them more often when it is hotter or the work is harder. Schedule the heaviest work for the cooler part of the day when you can. Do not skip a break to finish a job.

4. **Ease new and returning workers into the heat**
   Workers who are new, or back from time off, have not gotten used to the heat yet and are at higher risk. Give them lighter work and more breaks at first, then build up slowly. The same goes for everyone when a heat wave first hits.

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5 **Know the warning signs**

Heat cramps and heat rash are early warnings. Heat exhaustion can bring heavy sweating, headache, dizziness, nausea, weakness and thirst, so stop, cool down and drink water. Confusion, slurred speech, fainting or seizures can mean heat stroke, which is a medical emergency.

6 **Act fast on heat stroke**

Call 911 and tell your supervisor right away. Move the worker to a cool, shaded place, cool them with cold water, ice or wet cloths and a fan, and stay with them until help arrives. Do not let them drive themselves anywhere or go home alone.

Scenario

Picture this: It is the first hot week of summer. A new laborer started on Monday and is pushing hard to keep up with the crew. After lunch he says he has a headache and feels sick to his stomach, but he says he is fine and keeps working. Later that afternoon he is stumbling and not making sense when you talk to him. What do you do right now, and what could the crew have done earlier in the day?

Crew discussion

1. Where is the drinking water on this job, and is it close enough that people actually use it?
2. Where can we take breaks in the shade or a cool spot today?
3. Who on the crew is new or just back, and how will we ease them in?
4. If someone shows signs of heat stroke, who calls 911, and what address do we give?

Bottom line **Drink water often, rest in the shade, watch each other for warning signs and call 911 for heat stroke.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Heat stress / Estrés por calor

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____

Location / Lugar _____

Company / Empresa _____

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