

# Supervisors Safety Bulletin™ Training Toolbox



This training tool is included with your membership to Supervisors Safety Bulletin – the latest news, rules, updates and training tools for a safe company and a safer workforce.

## Heat-related illnesses: Too hot to handle

### ■ Keeping cool when the temperature's not

**W**hether you're working inside or outside, excessive heat levels can cause serious injuries or even death.

#### What to know

Every year, 30 workers die from heat exhaustion, and thousands more suffer from serious heat-related illnesses.

Most of these illnesses occur when the body loses its ability to cool itself.

Remember OSHA's slogan: "Water. Rest. Shade."

#### Prevention

The best thing you can do for yourself: Hydrate. You should aim to drink a cup of water every 15 minutes.

In addition:

- Take a break whenever you feel you need it
- Rest in the shade, or air conditioning, if it's available
- Don't try to "keep up" with others
- Gradually acclimate yourself to working in heat for long periods of time
- Avoid drinks with alcohol, caffeine or high amounts of sugar. These may contribute to dehydration



- Wear light, breathable clothing, and
- Use sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses.

#### What to watch for

Symptoms of heat-related illnesses can vary, but here are some common symptoms to watch out for:

- dizziness
- headache
- nausea
- cramps, and
- excessive sweating.

If you experience any of these, stop working, rest, and drink fluids until you feel better.

If these treatments don't work, bathe or shower in cool water.

Left untreated, these symptoms could lead to something much worse.

#### In case of emergency

Keep it simple: If you feel bad, get out of the heat and take a break.

If the nearest medical center is more than a few minutes away, someone on site should be trained in first aid.

Know who this person is and how to reach them in an emergency.

### HEAT INDEX

**W**hy does humidity make it feel so much hotter? Because the moisture in the air makes it harder for sweat to evaporate – which makes it harder for the body to cool itself.

That's why it's important to understand the heat index – it uses the temperature and relative humidity to calculate the "real feel" for the temperature.

But watch out – the heat index values are devised for shady, light wind conditions. Working in direct sunlight can increase the heat index values by 15°F.

As the heat index increases, you should take greater steps to prepare yourself.

Check the forecast each day for the local heat index.

#### Understanding the index

Here's what your up against at each level of the heat index:

- **Less than 91°F.** Risk Level: Low. You should drink water and apply sunscreen.
- **91°F to 103°F.** Risk Level: Moderate. Follow the same tips for the lower risk level, but use greater caution.
- **103°F to 115°F.** Risk Level: High. Take frequent breaks and use a buddy system.
- **Greater than 115°F.** Risk Level: Very high to extreme. At this level, you should strictly follow all of the recommended heat illness prevention steps.

# Training Session Quiz

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

1 OSHA's slogan on preventing heat-related illnesses is "Water. Rest. Shade."

true  false

2 You should drink a cup of water every half hour to stay hydrated.

true  false

3 If you feel dizzy, just drink more water and get back to work – hydration is important, but you also want to keep your blood moving.

true  false

4 You should avoid sugary, caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, as they can lead to dehydration.

true  false

5 When in doubt about how hard you should work in hot weather, you should just try to keep pace with the other workers.

true  false

6 If your muscles are cramping, you may drink a sports beverage or clear juice to help replace electrolytes.

true  false

7 When working in hot weather, it's best to gradually acclimate your body to the temperature; you should gradually work longer shifts.

true  false

8 If medical facilities are only a few minutes away, your employer doesn't need to have someone trained in first aid on site.

true  false

9 About 30 workers die every year from heat exhaustion, and thousands more suffer from heat-related illnesses.

true  false

10 Taking a cool shower or bath is a good way to recover from overheating.

true  false

## ANSWERS

1. True. You should drink water regularly, rest whenever you need to, and take breaks in the shade.
2. False. As a rule of thumb, you should drink a cup of water every 15 minutes to ward off dehydration.
3. False. If you feel dizzy, you should drink water – but you shouldn't continue working. You should rest until you feel better.
4. True. Alcohol can lead to dehydration. In addition, caffeine and sugar are believed to contribute to dehydration.
5. False. In hot weather, it's best to work at a pace that you feel comfortable at. Moving at someone else's pace may exhaust you.
6. True. Sports beverages and clear juices can help replace the water and salt your body sweats out.
7. True. If your body isn't used to working in excessive heat, it can wear out faster.
8. True. Your employer isn't required to have someone trained in first aid if medical facilities are close by.
9. True. On average, heat exhaustion kills 30 workers and hospitalizes thousands more every year.
10. True. A cool shower or bath can help cool the injured person and bring down their internal temperature.

## CLOTHING: YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE



One of the worst things you can do while working in the sun is remove your shirt.

Not only do you risk getting sunburn, but you're losing a valuable cooling device: Your clothing absorbs sweat, holds it against your body, and helps keep you cool.

When working outside, wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing.

Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and a wide-brimmed hat to protect you from the sun and heat.