

May 11, 2020

Health & Safety Moment

Heat-related Illnesses and First Aid

Heat stroke, the most serious form of heat-related illness, happens when the body becomes unable to regulate its core temperature. When sweating stops and the body can no longer rid itself of excess heat. Signs include confusion, loss of consciousness, and seizures. Heat stroke is a medical emergency that may result in death! Call 911 immediately.

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to loss of water and salt from heavy sweating. Signs include headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, irritability, thirst, and heavy sweating.

Heat cramps are caused by the loss of body salts and fluid during sweating. Low salt levels in muscles cause painful cramps. Tired muscles—those used for performing the work—are usually the ones most affected by cramps. Cramps may occur during or after working hours.

Heat rash, also known as prickly heat, is skin irritation caused by sweat that does not evaporate from the skin. Heat rash is the most common problem in hot work environments.

The following chart shows symptoms and first aid measures to take if a worker shows signs of a heat-related illness.



ILLNESS	SYMPTOMS	FIRST AID
Heat Stroke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion • Fainting • Seizures • Excessive sweating or red, hot, dry skin • Very high body temperature 	Call 911 and while waiting for help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place worker in shady, cool area • Loosen clothing, remove outer clothing • Fan air on worker; cold packs in armpits • Wet worker with cool water; apply ice packs, cool compresses, or ice if available • Provide fluids (preferably water) as soon as possible • Stay with worker until help arrives
Heat Exhaustion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cool, moist skin • Heavy sweating • Headache • Nausea or vomiting • Dizziness • Light headedness • Weakness • Thirst • Irritability • Fast heart beat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have worker sit or lie down in a cool, shady area • Give worker plenty of water or other cool beverages to drink • Cool worker with cold compresses/ice packs • Take to clinic or emergency room for medical evaluation or treatment if signs or symptoms worsen or do not improve within 60 minutes. • Do not return to work that day
Heat Cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscle spasms • Pain • Usually in abdomen, arms, or legs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have worker rest in shady, cool area • Worker should drink water or other cool beverages • Wait a few hours before allowing worker to return to strenuous work • Have worker seek medical attention if cramps don't go away
Heat Rash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clusters of red bumps on skin • Often appears on neck, upper chest, folds of skin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to work in a cooler, less humid environment when possible • Keep the affected area dry

Tips For Staying Safe

1. Drink water even if you aren't thirsty – every 15 minutes.
2. Rest in the shade.
3. Watch out for each other.
4. Wear hats and light-colored clothing.



If someone in your crew has symptoms:

1. Tell the person who has a radio/phone and can call the supervisor – you need medical help.
2. Start providing first aid while you wait for the ambulance to arrive.
3. Move the person to cool off in the shade.
4. Little by little, give him water (as long as he is not vomiting).
5. Loosen his clothing.
6. Help cool him: fan him, put ice packs in groin and underarms, or soak his clothing with cool water.

When you call for help, you need to:

1. Be prepared to describe the symptoms.
2. Give specific and clear directions to your work site.

Stay safe and healthy!
WATER. REST. SHADE.
The work can't get done without them.

Your Health Is Our Top Priority

Thank you to our dedicated ReWa team and all public service professionals for your continued commitment to our communities.

