

SURVIVAL TIPS

Suggestions to keep you healthy and free of injury

The heat is killing me!

Heat stress is a significant hazard. It can be caused by working directly in the sun, or by a combination of summer heat and hot factory processes. Some people are less tolerant of heat than others. Heat stress will be worse if you are medically unfit, overweight, suffer from heart disease, have a hangover, or are not acclimatised.

The symptoms of heat stress include:

- fainting;
- heat exhaustion and cramps;
- skin rashes (prickly heat);
- heat fatigue;
- worsening of pre-existing illnesses;
- mental and/or physical fatigue leading to errors and mistakes.
- heat stroke, which is life-threatening (see tip 6).

Employers are required to provide, where practicable, a working environment in which employees are not exposed to thermal hazards and to maintain atmospheric air quality.

Tip 1: Identify hazards

Heat stress is caused by:

- high temperature;
- high relative humidity;
- lack of air movement;
- radiant temperature of surroundings;
- physical activity.

Your employer must inform you of heat hazards in your work environment, the impact heat exposure may have on your health and what precautions you must take.

Tip 2: Understand the effects

Heat stress increases sweating and depletes body fluids, leading to heat intolerance. This reduces your work capacity and efficiency. Other signs of heat stress include tiredness, irritability, inattention and muscular cramps. All these factors increase the risk of you having an accident, so know your limitations.

Tip 3: Watch out for your mates

In hot conditions your workmates may:

- stop sweating. Body temperatures will rise (40-43 degrees C), and skin will be hot and dry.
- feel sick, suffer nausea, dizziness, weakness. Sit them down, call for help and tell your supervisor immediately.
- not notice symptoms. Their survival depends on co-workers' ability to identify symptoms and to seek medical help.

Tip 4: To minimise heat stress:

- replace fluid loss by drinking more water, juices and non-alcoholic/non fizzy drinks;
- ensure at-risk workers drink water frequently;
- take rest breaks in a cool place;
- increase air circulation to assist evaporation of sweat;
- maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Tip 5: Effective ventilation

Ensure hot and stagnant or dusty atmospheric conditions

are minimised. Poorly ventilated areas can induce heat-related illnesses. Use fans to spot cool areas with high heat production.

Tip 6: Heat stroke

Heat stroke is less common than heat stress, but can be life threatening and needs urgent medical attention. Confusion and loss of consciousness may occur. First aiders should be trained to spot warning signs. Until a doctor is available, cool the person as quickly as possible by soaking the patient's clothing in cold water, giving cool fluids if the person is conscious, and increasing air movement by fanning.

Tip 7: Rest breaks

Take into account work demands in high heat conditions:

- light work - 100% activity;
- medium work - 50% activity, 50% rest;
- heavy manual work - 25% activity 75% rest.

Remember, we all need recovery periods if working hard manually

Disclaimer: these survival tips are general in nature and are not intended to be comprehensive. Always take into account your own particular circumstances. If you have any questions, please discuss them with your supervisor.

These survival tips supplied by the New Zealand Safety Council, www.safetycouncil.org.nz or email info@safetycouncil.org.nz