

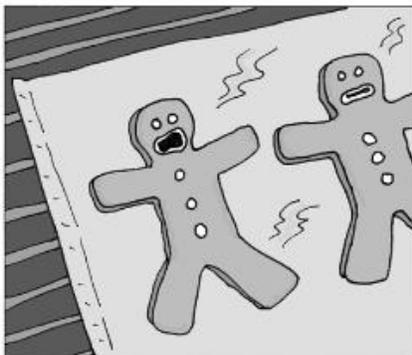
news & notes

HOT & HUMID = HAZARDOUS

The combination of heat and humidity that is common in many parts of the country is especially hazardous to workers. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recommends basic precautions, including:

- Drinking small amounts of water frequently;
- Taking frequent breaks in cool shade;
- Eating smaller meals before working;
- Avoiding caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar;
- Working in the shade if possible;
- Being aware that respirators or work suits can increase heat stress;
- Wearing light-colored, loose-fitting clothing, and a wide-brim hat; *and*
- Using sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.

Get more safety information at www.OSHA.gov/heat.



"Oh, yeah. The heat's starting to get to me."



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Accidents are hot!

Know what causes heat-related accidents

Every year, thousands of employees across the country suffer from serious heat-related illness. If not addressed, heat exhaustion can become heatstroke, which can be deadly. The problem is that performing labor-intensive activities like agriculture, construction, roofing, and landscaping in hot weather can raise body temperatures beyond levels that can be cooled by sweating.

Working in hot conditions can also cause accidents on the job.

- **Because heat affects the body's cooling system and reduces blood flow to the brain, muscles, and other organs, you can experience a decrease in strength and an increase in fatigue.** Fatigue can result in inattentiveness to job hazards and slow responses in emergencies.
- **Heat can also reduce your ability to understand instructions or retain information.** Even a short-term reduction in mental sharpness could result in an accident if you haven't made a correct or safe decision when dealing with a job or task.
- **And don't forget that heat usually makes people uncomfortable and irritable.** This can cause a worker to become easily frustrated, cut corners, or ignore safety procedures. This type of behavior is an open invitation to an accident.
- **There are also other risks caused by heat that can contribute to accidents.** For example, sweaty hands can drop tools or fogged-up safety glasses can cause you to trip and fall.

As these examples indicate, working in hot conditions can be hazardous for many reasons. You can probably think of other ways heat might increase the risk of accidents.

So how do you prevent accidents from happening in hot working conditions? One important step that can be taken to reduce heat stress risks is to use personal protective equipment (PPE) that has been designed especially for hot conditions. For example:

- Light hats that provide shade for the head, face, and neck when working outdoors;
- Portable water products that can be worn on the back or around the waist and accessed through a straw or tube system to provide adequate fluids;
- Reflective clothing that reduces the impact of radiant heat; *and*
- Systems that circulate air around the body, such as those used with full-body suits with air-supplied breathing systems.

news & notes

NEW OSHA POSTER

OSHA has redesigned the familiar poster that reminds workers of their rights and employers of their responsibilities. It has been updated to include new obligations for reporting every fatality and every inpatient hospitalization, amputation, and loss of an eye.

Job Safety and Health—It's the Law is hanging where employee notices are customarily posted in your workplace. The poster advises workers that they have the right to:

1. Request an OSHA inspection,
2. Receive information and training on job hazards,
3. Report an injury or illness, *and*
4. Raise safety and health concerns with their employer or OSHA without retaliation.

The poster informs employers of their legal obligation to provide a safe workplace.

The poster is free and can be downloaded from the OSHA website at www.osha.gov/Publications/poster.html.



Heat-related accidents quiz

Test what you know

Select the correct response for each of the following statements.

1. The body's response to excessive heat can cause fatigue, which can lead to accidents on the job. **True or False**
2. Excessive heat increases mental alertness. **True or False**
3. Fight the heat by drinking a gallon of water quickly all at once whenever you get thirsty. **True or False**
4. Drink caffeine when working in the heat so you have extra energy to get the job done quickly and get out of the heat. **True or False**
5. Humid conditions can make your hand sweaty and could cause you to drop tools or equipment. **True or False**

ANSWERS

1. True. 2. False. Excessive heat can reduce your ability to understand instructions or retain information. Even a short-term reduction in mental sharpness could result in an accident. 3. False. Fight the heat by drinking small amounts of water frequently. 4. False. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar when working in the heat. 5. True.

Taming the Heat Wave

How to stay cool

Heat stress is an ever-present danger, not only for outdoor workers, but also for those working indoors in hot environments. Sweating is one way the body uses to maintain a stable temperature in the face of heat, but sweating is only effective if the humidity level is low enough to permit evaporation, and if the fluids and salts that are lost are adequately replaced.

If the body cannot dispose of excess heat, it will begin to store it. When this happens, the body's core temperature rises and the heart rate increases. An overheated person will begin to lose concentration, become irritable, and may even lose the desire to drink. The next step is fainting and then possibly death if the individual is not cooled down.

Take precautions to prevent becoming a victim of heat stress:

- **Gradually adjust to a hot climate** by working shorter hours at first and then increasing the time exposure and workload slowly over a period of days.
- **Take plenty of rest breaks** in a cool area.
- **Drink a lot of fluids**, including water and sports beverages. Avoid caffeinated or alcoholic drinks.
- **Occasionally douse yourself with water.**
- **Wear lightweight, loose fitting clothing**, including a brimmed hat and sunglasses.
- **Apply all-day sunscreen** to avoid sunburn.