

Fact Sheet: Work in Hot Environments

This Fact Sheet provides basic information for all employees whose work could lead to ill effects following exposure to heat.

This information does NOT substitute for medical advice: it provides an outline of common signs and symptoms which people exposed to heat may experience. Your risk controls for work involving heat should have minimised the risk: however, every workplace must develop first aid and emergency procedures appropriate to its operation and hazards, and make sure that employees understand them.

The next page is a simple form which may be adapted to assist in the investigation of any incident involving ill effects following an employee's exposure to heat.

A quick guide to the warning signs of harmful effects

"Heat stress" includes a number of related conditions, including heat stroke and heat exhaustion. In all of these, the body is under stress through overheating. Heat stress is a life-threatening condition.

Work involving heat can lead to physical discomfort without meaning you are at risk of any more serious condition developing. However, you must be aware of the early warning signs of heat stress, and take appropriate action if you experience them – or if you observe another person who appears to be in difficulty.

The warning signs to watch for are:

- **Heat rashes – hives, sunburn**
- **Heat cramps – painful muscle spasms, heavy sweating**
- **Blurred vision**
- **Dizziness, exhaustion**
- **Slurred speech**
- **Difficulty in thinking clearly**

Once one of these signs has been experienced or observed, you should stop work and take steps to safeguard health. For outdoor work, this could mean reducing the workload, seeking shade, replacing lost fluids (drink water – avoid caffeine), resting frequently if the job cannot be put off until a cooler time of day. *Light, loose-fitting clothing will help, but if protective clothing and equipment has been determined as necessary, it must not be discarded.*

Contact your supervisor without delay. For all work involving exposure to heat, it's essential that you know the first aid arrangements and emergency procedures. In the case of isolated or remote work, it is critical that you know emergency procedures and contact numbers before you start the job.

And make sure that any heat-related 'incident' is reported and investigated. Other people will learn from your experience, and preventive measures can be reviewed and improved.

Heat-related Incident Investigation

Employee Name: _____

Position and Work Location: _____

Date/Time of Incident: _____

Reported to: _____

Incident Investigation completed by: _____

Date: _____

1. What job was being done at the time?

2. How long had the affected employee been doing this task?

3. What heat-related effects did they experience?

4. What immediate action did they take (eg. did they stop work immediately, did they seek first aid or medical treatment)?

5. What were the sources of the heat which affected the employee (eg. high temperature, high humidity, hot plant)?

6. Did anything else contribute to their condition (eg. strenuous physical exertion, pace of work)?

7. Recommended action to prevent a recurrence of this situation:

(Look first to risk controls which address the hazard at its source: try to fix the problem without dependence on procedures or the use of personal protective equipment.)

Approved by: _____

Date: _____