

8 Tips for Protecting Workers from Heat Stress



It's officially summer now, which means that workers who do their jobs outside will be exposed to hot and humid weather and thus vulnerable to heat stress.

Here are eight tips from the [NIOSH Science Blog](#) on work practices you can use to protect workers from heat stress this season:

1. Limit time in the heat, increase recovery time spent in a cool environment or both.
2. Reduce the metabolic demands of the job, such as by using tools with efficient ergonomic designs or specifically intended to minimize manual strain, or increasing the number of workers per task.
3. Train supervisors and workers to recognize early signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses and to administer appropriate first aid.
4. Implement a buddy system where workers observe each other for early signs and symptoms of heat intolerance.
5. Some situations may require workers to conduct self-monitoring. A work group, which includes workers, a qualified healthcare provider and a safety manager, should be developed to make decisions on self-monitoring options and standard operating procedures.
6. Provide adequate amounts of cool, potable water near the work area and encourage workers to drink.

- If in the heat <2 hours and involved in moderate work activities, drink 1 cup (8 oz.) of water every 15'20 minutes.
 - During prolonged sweating lasting several hours, drink sports drinks containing balanced electrolytes.
 - Avoid alcohol and drinks with high caffeine or sugar.
 - Generally, fluid intake should not exceed 6 cups per hour.
7. Implement a heat alert program whenever the weather service forecasts that a heat wave is likely to occur in the following days.
8. Institute a [heat acclimatization plan](#) and increase physical fitness. Gradually increase time in hot conditions over 7 to 14 days.
- For new workers: The schedule should be no more than 20% of the usual duration of work in the heat on day 1 and no more than 20% increase on each additional day. Closely supervise new employees for the first 14 days or until they're fully acclimated.
 - For workers with previous experience: The schedule should be no more than 50% of the usual duration of work in the heat on day 1, 60% on day 2, 80% on day 3, and 100% on day 4.

The OHS Insider has more tips, tools, information and other resources on protecting workers from heat stress, including:

- [Why you should take steps to protect workers from heat stress](#)
- Why [new and young workers](#) are especially vulnerable to heat stress
- Information on [an app](#) that lets workers and supervisors calculate the heat index

Download this heat stress self-audit checklist.