

Brief Your JHSC on the Heat Stress Death of Joseph Jolley



Every year, dozens of workers die and thousands more become ill while working in hot or humid conditions.

So begins the [landing page of the U.S. OSHA website](#) dedicated to helping employers protect workers from the hazards of heat stress. At first blush, 'dozens of workers' is a compelling statistic, one that I wouldn't hesitate to cite if I were authoring a website on workplace heat stress prevention. The problem with that or any statistic related to this topic is that it can never come close to doing justice to the actual human suffering that a heat stress death involves—not simply to the victims but to their families.

Remembering the Victims of Heat Stroke

A real flesh and blood example of one of those 'dozens of workers' who fall victim to heat stress each year is Joseph Christopher Jolley. Since you've probably never heard his name before, I'll tell you his story based on what I could find from my research into his untimely death.

It happened over a decade ago on June 8, 2011. It was a blazing hot day even for the folks of Shreveport, Louisiana where high temps and humidity are par for the course. Mr. Jolley, a 50-year-old employee of Libbey Glass, was working in

the warehouse in temperatures of 102øF to 112øF (39øC to 44øC). He complained of heat stress and was taken to the cafeteria where he collapsed. EMT was called and he was rushed to the hospital. But it was too late. By the time the ambulance arrived, Mr. Jolley was dead.

I wish I knew more about what happened to Mr. Jolley and why his tragedy was seemingly ignored by the local newspapers. Unfortunately, the brief mention in a [United Steelworker fatality report](#) was the only account of his case that I could find.

But, then, just as I was getting ready to close my all too brief file on Joseph Christopher Jolley, I found the obituary. It was like a blow to the solar plexus.

JOSEPH CHRISTOPHER JOLLEY

SHREVEPORT, LA – Funeral services for Joseph Christopher Jolley, 50, will be held at 10:00 am on Monday, June 13, 2011, at Rockett Funeral Home Chapel in Ringgold, LA. Burial will follow at Springhill Cemetery.

Visitation will be held from 5:00 until 7:00 pm on Sunday, June 12, 2011, at Rockett Funeral Home.

Chris was born on May 9, 1961 in Shreveport, LA and passed away on June 8, 2011. He was preceded in death by his father, Fred Jolley.

Left to cherish his memories are his mother, Mary Jolley of Elm Grove; his brothers, Fred C. Jolley of Nederland, TX and Charles Jolley of Doyline, LA; his sister, Casey Jolley of Converse, TX; nieces, Brandy

Wood, Alyssa Jolley and Hannah Jolley; along with a host of other relatives and friends.

Pallbearers will be Bruce Vosburg, Jerry Vosburg, Don Weber, Keith Regan, Mark Boone and Randy Weldon. . .

Source: *Shreveport Times*, June 12, 2011

Good bye, Mr. Jolley, and may you rest in peace. And though I never knew you, at least I know your name, where you lived and how you ended your all too brief existence on earth.

And that's a whole lot more than I can about those other 'dozens of workers' that die of heat stroke in 'an average year.'

Let's Protect Our Own Workers from Heat Stress

The silver lining in this very dark story is that it serves as a reminder of the dangers of heat stress and the devastation it can wreak on workers, especially at this time of the year. So, let's all resolve to never let what happened to Joseph Jolley happen to any of our workers and work together to implement a [comprehensive strategy](#) to control heat stress hazards at our own workplace. Specifically, to accomplish this goal, we must do 5 basic things:

1. Ensure a competent person does a [heat stress hazard assessment](#) at the workplace to determine whether workers are exposed to thermal conditions that could cause their core body temperature to rise above 36°C/96.8°F based on how hot the air actually **feels** on a worker's body;
2. Use engineering and work controls and PPE to maintain thermal comfort at the workplace and [limit exposure to heat stress](#) to Threshold Limit Values (TLVs) levels classified as posing 'little danger' to workers;
3. Train workers on heat stress dangers, including how to recognize and what to do if they observe the signs and symptoms of heat stress;
4. Consider whether we need to help workers adapt to heat exposure via a process called [acclimatization](#), which involves exposing those required to work in a hot

environment for progressively longer periods so that the body learns to sweat more efficiently and maintain normal body temperatures; and

5. Have one or more competent persons personally monitor workers working in extreme conditions posing high hazards of heat stress.