

# Protecting Muslim Workers' Safety During Ramadan



Ramadan, a period of prayer, fasting, charity-giving and self-accountability for Muslims, began on June 7, 2016. Why should safety professionals be aware of this month-long religious holiday? Because if observant Muslim workers are fasting, they can be vulnerable to certain health and safety risks in the workplace, especially since the holiday falls in the summer this year.

Asia Petroleum Ltd. has these health and safety tips to address hazards affecting workers during Ramadan:

## 1. Dehydration

Workers who are fasting don't eat or drink anything, even water. This dehydration can cause symptoms ranging from headaches to heat stress. To protect Muslim workers who work outside and are exposed to the heat from the effects of dehydration, ensure that they have adequate amounts of clean water to drink, have them stay indoors or in shade during the hottest part of the day and limit their physical activities. You may also need to take additional precautions to protect such workers from heat stress.

## 2. Low Blood Sugar

Fasting can cause hypoglycemia or low blood sugar, resulting in symptoms such as confusion, slurred speech and fainting during work. To avoid this problem, fasting workers should:

- Eat a healthy diet with two or three smaller meals during the non-fasting period to prevent after-meal hyperglycemia.
- Avoid large amounts of foods rich in carbohydrates and saturated fat at the sunset meal and eat more simple carbohydrates.
- Eat more 'complex' carbohydrates at the predawn meal, which should be taken as late as possible before the start of the daily fast in order to avoid hypoglycemia.
- Increase their fluid intake (preferably of water) to prevent dehydration
- Exercise but modify intensity and timing of exercise to avoid hypoglycemia. The best time for exercise is 2 hours after the sunset meal. Excessive physical activity may lead to higher risk of hypoglycemia and should be

avoided during Ramadan.

### **3. Fatigue**

Evening prayer, social activities and fasting associated with Ramadan contribute to fatigue, which poses a safety hazard both in the workplace and behind the wheel. The most important way for Muslim workers to prepare for the fast is to make sure that they're well hydrated. Drink at least 3 liters of water between Iftar and Sehri to help avoid fatigue or feeling sick during the fast.

Also, remind workers to look out for the warning signs of fatigue, including:

- Difficulty focusing or loss of concentration
- Drowsiness
- Frequent blinking
- Heavy eyelids
- Sore or tired eyes
- Blurred vision
- Daydreaming/disconnected or wandering thoughts
- Frequent yawning
- Trouble keeping your head up
- Slow reactions.