Workplace Health & Safety During Ramadan



Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, began on July 9, 2013. It's a period of prayer, fasting, charity-giving and self-accountability for Muslims. If observant Muslim workers are participating in these activities, they can be vulnerable to certain health and safety risks in the workplace.

For example, workers who are fasting for Ramadan don't eat or drink anything'even water. So they can become dehydrated.

The effects of dehydration can range from a simple headache to dangerous conditions, including heat stroke. So the inability to drink during the day can be a serious issue for Muslim workers who work outside and are exposed to the heat. As a result, you may need to take additional precautions to protect such workers from heat stress. (Watch this recorded webinar for some useful strategies and tips.)

In addition, the evening prayer and social activities associated with Ramadan can contribute to fatigue. And fatigue poses a safety hazard both in the workplace and behind the wheel.

So 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.

Also, remember that the human rights laws bar you from discriminating based on religion and require you to accommodate a worker's religious practices to the point of undue hardship. To fulfill that duty, consider making the following accommodations during Ramadan for Muslim workers:

- If possible, make allowances for time at sunset for Muslim workers to end their fast and pray, such as by juggling lunch and coffee break schedules.
- As evenings are spent in prayer during Ramadan, try to avoid committing workers to evening shifts and functions.