



Safety Matters

Talking Points for Universal Engineering Sciences



Avoid Heat Illness

When it is hot outside, your body temperature can rise to dangerous levels. Normally, your body cools itself through sweating. However, in hot and humid weather, sweating is not enough and the result can be a heat illness.

Staying Cool

Follow the suggestions below to stay cool when working in hot weather:

- Wear loose, light-colored clothing and some type of hat.
- Adapt to working in hot conditions gradually, especially if performing strenuous tasks.
- Take breaks in the shade when possible, and remove any outer protective gear you may be wearing.
- Avoid overexerting yourself during peak temperature periods (midday).
- Drink liquids frequently, even if you don't feel thirsty - at least eight ounces every 20 to 30 minutes. Choose water, fruit juice or sports drinks and stay away from liquids containing caffeine, which can dehydrate you.

Recognizing the Symptoms

There are three forms of heat illness, each with its own distinct symptoms:

- Heat Cramps – severe muscle spasms in the back, stomach, arms and legs, which are attributed to the loss of body salt and water during periods of heavy perspiration
- Heat Exhaustion – heavy sweating, cool or pale skin, nausea, headache, weakness, vomiting and fast pulse
- Heat Stroke – high body temperature, sweating stops, red and often dry skin, rapid breathing and pulse, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, confusion or unconsciousness

Providing Treatment

It is essential to treat heat illness as soon as possible. If you are feeling any of the above symptoms, inform a co-worker and ask for help. If you suspect that a fellow worker has any of these conditions, follow the first-aid suggestions below:

- Heat Cramps – Move the victim to a cooler area and provide them with water or other cool, nonalcoholic beverages. Follow up with a medical examination.
- Heat Exhaustion – Move the victim to a cooler area and keep them lying down with their legs slightly elevated. Cool their body by fanning and applying cool, wet towels. Have them drink approximately six ounces of water every 15 minutes. Follow up with a medical examination.
- Heat Stroke – You or a bystander should immediately call an ambulance. Meanwhile, move the victim to a cooler area, remove their outer clothing, immerse them in cool water or apply cool, wet towels or cloths to the body. If the person is awake and able to swallow, give them small amounts of cool water to drink. If medical help is delayed, call the hospital for further instructions while waiting. Heat stroke is life-threatening, so it's important to move quickly!

Safety Reminder

The risk of heat illness increases with age, poor diet, being overweight, insufficient liquid intake, poor physical condition and/or when taking medication. Never take salt tablets without your doctor's approval. Be aware of weather conditions when you will be working outside so that you can be prepared with appropriate clothing and beverages. If you are working outside and start to feel any adverse symptoms, inform your supervisor and take a break.

Heat illness can be a serious threat. Your best defense is to learn how to stay cool when the weather heats up.