

OSHA's Proposed Heat Standard – What to Know...

As of May 2026, OSHA has not finalized its federal heat-specific standard but is enforcing a renewed “National Emphasis Program (NEP) for Heat-Related Hazards.” A proposed rule from August 2024 (80 degrees Fahrenheit trigger) remains in progress, while inspectors use the *General Duty Clause* for enforcement during peak heat. Iowa OSHA is a participating chapter for this regulation.



Key 2026 OSHA Heat Standard Updates

- **NEP Extended:** The National Emphasis Program for indoor and outdoor heat hazards was updated in April 2026 to remain in effect for five additional years.
- **Enforcement Intensity:** OSHA is conducting almost 10 times more inspections compared to 2015-2020, focusing on high-risk industries on heat priority days.
- **Pending Rule (Proposed):** A proposed federal standard introduced in 2024 to create mandatory, industry-wide heat illness prevention plans is still working through the federal rulemaking process.
- **Legal Basis:** Because a final rule is not yet published, citations currently rely on the *General Duty Clause*, requiring employers to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards causing or likely to cause death or serious harm.

Core Requirements Under Current NEP

- **Heat Illness Prevention Plan:** A written plan is highly recommended.
- **Acclimatization:** Gradual exposure for new or returning workers.
- **Rest/Water/Shade:** Easy access to water and designated rest/shade areas.
- **Training:** Workers must be trained to recognize heat symptoms of *heat stress and heat stroke*, as well as understand emergency procedures.

Important Reminders

- **Iowa OSHA:** Although Iowa is a state-plan OSHA chapter, it adopts and is subject to the federal NEP.
- **NIOSH Heat Safety Tool:** This downloadable app is an excellent resource for OSHA's Heat Standard, including up-to-the-minute heat index values. OSHA's Heat Standard is largely developed from this app.

Sources: Szymendera, S. D. (2025). *OSHA and heat exposure (IN11701)*. Congressional Research Service.
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11701>.

Peterson, P. (2025). Iowa OSHA Consultation Supervisor.