CrewSigned

Heat Stress Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Heat can kill, and it can do it fast. Every summer workers die from heat stroke, and many of them were in their first few days on the job. Today we are going to talk about how heat illness starts, how to spot it, and what we do about it.

Your body cools itself by sweating. When it is hot and humid, when you are working hard, or when you are wearing heavy clothing or PPE, your body can make heat faster than it can get rid of it. Your core temperature climbs, and that is when people get sick.

It starts small. Heat rash and cramps are early warnings. Heat exhaustion comes next: heavy sweating, headache, dizziness, nausea, weakness, and feeling thirsty and worn out. If you feel that, stop, tell someone, get into the shade, cool off and drink water. Do not try to push through it.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Watch for confusion, slurred speech, acting strange, passing out or seizures. The skin may be hot and dry, or the person may still be sweating. If you see this, call 911 right away. Then cool the person as fast as you can: move them to shade, soak their clothes with cool water, fan them, and put ice or cold packs on them. Stay with them until help arrives.

Prevention comes down to water, rest and shade. Drink water often, about a cup every fifteen to twenty minutes, even if you are not thirsty. Waiting until you are thirsty means you are already behind. Go easy on energy drinks and skip alcohol the night before. Take breaks in the shade or somewhere cool, and take more of them as the heat goes up.

New workers and anyone coming back from a week or more off need time to adjust. Your body gets better at handling heat over one to two weeks. During that time, new people should work shorter stretches in the heat and build up day by day. We will plan for that.

Look out for each other. People with heat illness often do not notice their own confusion. Use the buddy system, check on each other, and if anyone says stop because of the heat, we stop.

Discussion questions

1. Where is the closest shade and cool water on this site today?
2. Who on this crew is new or just back from time off and needs to build up to full workdays in the heat?
3. What would you do in the first two minutes if a coworker started acting confused in the heat?

OSHA standard

OSHA Heat Exposure guidance
https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure

SOURCES
Protecting you and your co-workers from heat exposure QuickCard (OSHA 3154): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3154.pdf
Heat-Related Illnesses and First Aid Fact Sheet (OSHA 4506): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA4506.pdf
NIOSH, Heat Stress and Workers: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/heat-stress/about/index.html
NIOSH Criteria for a Recommended Standard: Occupational Exposure to Heat and Hot Environments: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/publications/numbered/2016-106.html

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC
Heat Stress Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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