

Southern California Trade Contractors Association, Inc.

SAFETY NEWSLETTER

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Heat Illness Prevention SUPERVISORY TRAINING



Southern California Trade Contractors Association, Inc

Administrator

Mark Hebson
22925 Arlington Ave Ste 1
Torrance, CA 90501

Call Toll Free
(800) 530-9662
FAX 310-530-0081
www.socattrade.com

Now that summer is fast approaching, it is time to review the California Heat Illness Prevention requirements. In a one-year investigation of 25 cases of suspected heat-related illnesses, Cal/OSHA found that more than half of the heat illness victims died, and almost one third of them required hospitalization. **Heat illness can kill.**

The best defense against heat-related illnesses and fatalities is prevention. The Heat Illness Prevention Standard requires all employers with outdoor worksites to take 4 basic steps:

1. Provide heat illness prevention training to all employees, including supervisors.
2. Provide enough water so that each employee can drink at least 1 quart per hour and encourage them to do so.
3. Provide access to shade for at least 5 minutes of rest when an employee believes he or she needs a preventative recovery period. They should not wait until they feel sick to do so.
4. Develop and implement written procedures for complying with the heat illness prevention standard.

Training:

Before employees can work outdoors, employers are required to provide them with heat illness prevention training. This mandatory training for supervisors and employees includes:

1. Environmental and personal risk factors
2. Employers heat illness prevention plan and procedures
3. They need to drink water frequently throughout the day
4. Importance of acclimatization (allowing the body to adjust gradually to the work in high heat)
5. Types of heat illness and the signs and symptoms
6. Necessity of immediately reporting to an employer any signs or symptoms
7. Employers' procedures for contacting emergency medical services. This includes alternative modes of transportation
8. Employers' procedures for emergency communications. This includes the emergency response procedures such as location, local medical services, and communication alternatives.

Adjusting to the Heat

One training component for employees on heat illness prevention is the importance of acclimatization. Typically, people need 4 to 14 days to fully adjust to significant increase in the heat. Most heat related fatalities occur to new employees in the first four days on the job and were unaccustomed to working in hot or humid weather.

The best strategy for acclimatization is to allow employees, and especially new ones, to adjust to hot weather by gradually increasing to a full work shift and pace. On very hot days, other good strategies include timing the shift so that more work can be done during the cooler parts of the day, increasing the number of water and rest breaks, and using a "buddy system" so that workers and supervisors can monitor each other. Also, employees should be reminded

of the cooling benefits of wearing loose fitting, light-colored clothing and a wide-brimmed hat, when it's feasible.



Shade

Recent safety and health data shows that all the surviving victims of heat illness had access to some shade during work periods, lunch, or at breaks. Under the Cal/OSHA standard, an employee working outdoors who wants to cool off must be provided with shade for 5 minutes at a time. Shade for heat illness recovery periods must be accessible to employees at all times. In industries other than agriculture, employers may utilize measures other than shade to provide cooling if they can demonstrate that these alternative measures are at least as effective as shade.

Shade means blockage of direct sunlight. Shade is sufficient when objects do not cast a shadow in the shaded areas and there is sufficient space for the employee to be comfortable. Shade is not adequate when the temperature in the shaded areas prevents cooling. You must avoid sources of shade such as metal sheds or parked cars that are hot from sitting in the sun. Also, tractors and other machinery do not qualify as sources of shade and have the potential to create an even greater hazard.

If you have employees who work outdoors, consider some easy-to-assemble portable

sources of shade, such as umbrellas, canopies, or other temporary structures. Buildings, canopies, and trees all can qualify for shade as long as they block the sunlight and are either ventilated or open to air movement.



Water

The third component of the standard requires an employer to provide employees, working outdoors, one quart of potable, fresh and cool water per person, per hour.

In 2007, Cal/OSHA data revealed drinking water was present at all worksites, even though 78% of those who succumbed to the heat suffered from dehydration. Therefore, it is critical to keep drinking water accessible and remind your workers to drink it frequently.

An essential best practice is to provide water instead of drinks with caffeine and sugar, as these can dehydrate a person even more. Add ice to water, increase the number of water and rest breaks for employees, and keep the water nearby! You are better off avoiding alcohol altogether. The more you drink, even beer, the more dehydrated you will get.

Written Procedures

The Heat Illness Standard requires employers' procedures to be in writing and made available to representatives of Cal/OSHA upon request. These written procedures must include:

- How an employer will comply with the Heat Illness Standard requirements.
- How to respond to symptoms of possible heat illness, including how emergency medical services will be provided.
- How to contact emergency medical services, and if necessary, how employees will be transported to a point where they can be reached by an emergency medical service provider.
- How they will ensure that, in the event of an emergency clear and precise directions to the work site can and will be provided as needed to emergency responders.

Employers are encouraged to integrate their Heat Illness Prevention into their Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP's).

All the elements of the Heat Illness Prevention standard must be implemented to prevent serious illness to your workers. By protecting your employees from heat illness, you promote a healthier and more productive workplace.

Source: Cal/OSHA Heat Illness Prevention pamphlet and Cal/OSHA website.

PS: As of Feb 2010, there is a model Heat Illness Prevention plan available at http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/ESPHIP.pdf