

# Welcome to OSHA's Campaign to Prevent Heat Illness in Outdoor Workers

**HEAT ILLNESS CAN BE DEADLY.** Every year, thousands of workers become sick from exposure to heat, and some even die. **Heat illnesses and deaths are preventable.** Employers are responsible for providing workplaces that are safe from excessive heat.

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## What is heat illness?

The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken such as drinking water frequently and resting in the shade or air conditioning. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke requires **immediate medical attention** and can result in **death**.

## How can heat illness be prevented?

Employers should establish a complete heat illness prevention program to prevent heat illness. This includes: provide workers with water, rest and shade; gradually increase workloads and allow more frequent breaks for new workers or workers who have been away for a week or more to build a tolerance for working in the heat (**acclimatization**); modify work schedules as necessary; plan for emergencies and train workers about the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and their prevention; and monitor workers for signs of illness. **Workers new to the heat or those that have been away from work and are returning can be most vulnerable to heat stress and they must be acclimatized (see box).**

To prevent heat related illness and fatalities:

- Drink water every 15 minutes, even if you are not thirsty.
- Rest in the shade to cool down.
- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing.
- Learn the signs of heat illness and what to do in an emergency.
- Keep an eye on fellow workers.
- "Easy does it" on your first days of work in the heat. You need to get used to it.

If workers are new to working in the heat or returning from more than a week off, and for all workers on the first day of a sudden heat wave, implement a work schedule to allow them to get used to the heat gradually.

**Remember these three simple words: Water, Rest, Shade.** Taking these precautions can mean the difference between life and death.

## Who is affected?

Any worker exposed to hot and humid conditions is at risk of heat illness, especially those doing heavy work tasks or using bulky protective clothing and equipment. Some workers might be at greater risk than others if they have not built up a tolerance to hot conditions, ***including new workers, temporary workers, or those returning to work after a week or more off***. This also includes everyone during a heat wave.

Industries most affected by heat-related illness are: construction; trade, transportation and utilities; agriculture; building, grounds maintenance; landscaping services; and support activities for oil and gas operations.

## About the Campaign

OSHA's nationwide Heat Illness Prevention Campaign aims to raise awareness and teach workers and employers about the dangers of working in hot weather and provide valuable resources to address these concerns. Begun in 2011, the Heat Illness Prevention Campaign has reached more than 10.7 million people and distributed close to half a million fact sheets, posters, quick cards, training guides and wallet cards. OSHA is again joining with other federal and state agencies and non-governmental organizations to spread the word about preventing heat illness. For example, OSHA is continuing its partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service to include worker safety precautions in their [Excessive Heat Watch, Warning, and Advisory Products](#).

***How can OSHA help?*** Workers have a right to a safe workplace. If you think your job is unsafe or you have questions, contact OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742). It's confidential. We can help. If you have been punished or discriminated against for using your rights, such as raising health and safety concerns or filing a complaint, you must file a complaint with OSHA within 30 days. No form is required, but you must call or send a letter to OSHA within 30 days of the alleged discrimination. For other valuable worker protection information, such as Workers' Rights, Employer Responsibilities, and other services OSHA offers, visit [OSHA's Workers' page](#).

OSHA also provides help to employers. OSHA's [On-site Consultation Program](#) offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses in all states across the country, with priority given to high-hazard worksites. For more information or for additional compliance assistance contact OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742). It's confidential. We can help.