Outdoor Heat Stress

Working outdoors in hot weather can result in serious illness or even death. Workers exposed to extreme heat may experience symptoms of heat-related illnesses (HRI) such as heat cramps, heat rash, heat exhaustion, fainting, heat stroke, and other symptoms.

Heat-related illness is also linked to injuries from falls, equipment operation accidents and other on-the-job incidents. Such incidents can happen when someone with heat stress becomes fatigued, dizzy, confused, or disoriented.

Employers must address heat stress in their outdoor heat exposure safety program which includes, [safety training](https://wisha-training.lni.wa.gov/training/articulate/HeatIllness/story.html) on signs and symptoms of heat stress, providing water, shade and rest. The **Outdoor** Heat Exposure Rule [WAC 296-62-095](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=296-62&full=true#296-62-095) **applies to Washington State businesses all year long,** when exposures are **at or above temperatures listed in Table 1**.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Nonbreathable clothes including vapor barrier clothing or PPE such as chemical resistant suits. | 52°F | Action Level |
| All other clothing | 80°F | Action Level |
| Mandatory cool down of 10-mins / 2-hrs | 90°F | Mandatory Cool Down |
| Mandatory cool down 15-mins/1-hr | 100°F | Mandatory Cool Down |

*Table 1*

# Provide Water

* **[Company Name Here]** will supply water and encourage employees who work in hot weather to drink regularly, even when not thirsty. Employees will have enough drinking water to drink—at least 1 quart (four 8-ounce glasses) per hour.
* Ensure drinking water is suitably cool and readily accessible to workers at all times.

# Shade and Rest

* When temperatures reach or exceed an action level of 80°F **[Company Name Here]** will ensure that employees have sufficient means of shade or other sufficient means for cooling down, such as air-conditioned trailers or misting stations.
* Shade must block direct sunlight and not be in areas where the heat defeats the purpose of the shade, such as in a car without running air conditioning.
* Both preventative cool-down rest time and mandatory preventative cool-down rest periods will be paid unless taken during a meal period.
* **If the temperature is 90°F degrees or higher, a 10-minute cooldown rest period every 2-hrs and close observation of employees to identify signs of heat illness are mandatory.**
* **If temperatures reach 100°F or above, the cool-down rest periods must be 15 minutes every hour.**

# Signs/Symptoms of Heat-Related Illness

* **[Company Name Here]** will respond to workers showing signs and symptoms of heat-related illness by relieving them from duty, providing shade or other sufficient means to cool down and monitoring to determine whether medical attention is necessary by:
  + Closely observing employees not acclimated to heat for 14 consecutive days, including new employees and those returning from absences during heat waves.
  + Observing workers for alertness and signs or symptoms of heat-related illness,
  + Creating a buddy system when working alone in hot weather
  + Monitoring workers through regular communication, such as radio or cellular,
  + including workers that are working alone or performing duties in areas where observation is not possible.
* Ensure effective procedures for obtaining emergency medical services when needed. Time is critical.

# Prevention

* Train all workers and supervisors on the signs and symptoms of heat related illness.
* Inform workers they should avoid alcohol or drinks with caffeine prior to work in hot weather.
* Try to do the heaviest work during the cooler parts of the day.
* Allow workers time to acclimatize. Start slower and work up to your normal pace over time.
* Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored, breathable (e.g. cotton) clothing and a hat.

# Additional Resources

[Heat Illness Prevention Campaign | Occupational Safety and Health Administration (osha.gov)](https://www.osha.gov/heat)

[Be Heat Smart (wa.gov)](https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-training-materials/workshops-events/beheatsmart)

[Heat - Heat Hazard Recognition | Occupational Safety and Health Administration (osha.gov)](https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/hazards)

