

# Safety & Training Source

# Skilled

DECADES OF EXPERIENCE  
DEVOTED TO YOUR SAFETY.



A monthly resource for members of IMEA's Safety, Education & Training program.

April 2019

## Heat Stress : A Known Occupational Hazard

Heat Stress, a known occupational hazard for many industrial and utility workers, contributes to work related accidents and injuries. As if working with high voltage electricity 50 feet in the air wasn't dangerous enough, linemen workers must also be conscious of how their body temperature and the temperature outside may be affecting their job performance.

Heat stress is a common, yet often ignored hazard in the workplace. While it is widely recognized that heat stress can pose a serious health hazard to workers, employers may not realize that working in hot environments also increases safety risks.

Research conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) shows that work in hot environments is linked with lower mental alertness and physical performance, and subsequently, more injuries. Factor in elevated body temperature and physical discomfort and it's easy to see how workers can divert their attention from hazardous tasks and overlook common safety procedures.

## From the Desk of Duane Richardson

- 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.

Two primary sources of heat for workers: Workers become overheated from two primary sources: (1) the environmental conditions in which they work and (2) the internal heat generated by physical labor. Heat-related illnesses occur when the body is not able to lose enough heat to balance the heat generated by physical work and external heat sources. Weather conditions are the primary external heat sources for outdoor workers

\*This guidance is advisory in nature and informational in content. It is not a standard or regulation, and it neither creates new legal obligations nor alters existing obligations created by OSHA standards or the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Pursuant to the OSH Act, employers must comply with safety and health standards and regulations issued and enforced either by OSHA or by an OSHA-approved State Plan. In addition, the Act's General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1), requires employers to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm.



## IMEA CALENDAR

### May

- 2 Supervisor Safety Series:  
Session One: All About OSHA  
(Lawrenceburg)
- 15-17 IMEA Spring Conference &  
Business Meeting  
(Embassy Suites, Noblesville)
- 29 Brown Bag Workshop  
(Lebanon)

### June

- 10-14 IMEA 611 Basic  
Construction and  
Maintenance Workshop  
(Class #031918)  
(Lebanon)
- 19 Supervisor Development  
Series:  
Session One: Introduction  
to Supervision  
(Lawrenceburg)
- 24-28 IMEA 612 Intermediate  
Construction and  
Maintenance Workshop  
(Class # 032717 /  
#092517) (Lebanon)



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# STAYING HYDRATED



The average person has 2.6 million sweat glands. These glands are activated when a portion of the brain determines that the body needs to be cooled down. Sweat evaporates off our skin which allows for heat loss and cooling. However, when we sweat, we also lose water and electrolytes (i.e., “salts” such as sodium, chloride, potassium). Drinking enough water and having enough electrolytes is necessary for our bodies to function properly. This is why it is so important to stay hydrated; a dehydrated person is likely to start having symptoms of heat illness.

NIOSH recommends that for moderate activity in moderate conditions, each worker should drink 1 cup of water every 15 to 20 minutes. Workers should be reminded to drink water frequently before becoming thirsty in order to maintain good hydration. While some workers may prefer the taste of sports drinks, often these types of drinks are not necessary for electrolyte replacement. Workers that eat regular meals and salt-containing snacks will usually be able to replace electrolytes lost during sweating.

In addition to providing plenty of water in convenient locations close to the work site, employers can provide urine color charts near toilet facilities. These charts show the urine colors of a hydrated person compared to a dehydrated person. The darker the urine, the more likely your body is dehydrated.

## *Keeping Cool*

Even when the body is at rest, we are internally producing heat through metabolism (breaking down the food we eat into energy). However, during physical exertion, working muscle produces heat at a much higher, faster rate.

This increased heat production can result in an increase in body temperature, which above a certain temperature, can be difficult to control. Therefore, it is important to develop ways to cool down the body to help maintain core temperature and reduce the negative effects of thermal stress.

Workers should be allowed to take regular rest breaks. Breaks should be held in a shaded or air conditioned area. Employers and supervisors should be monitoring weather reports daily, and if possible, jobs with high heat exposure should be rescheduled to cooler times of the day. The use of reflective clothing, water-dampened cotton clothing (although this may not work when the humidity is very high), and cooling vests with pockets for cold packs may also be beneficial for keeping workers not only cooler for longer periods of time, but also safer.

**Safety Tip: Bring a water bottle.** A personal reusable water bottle is a must-have to stay happily hydrated throughout the work day. Placing the bottle visibly with you will encourage you to take more frequent sips of water while inhibiting any cravings for less healthy beverages.

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