

GOT RISK?

District *Safety* Gram PEOPLE-MISSION-SAFETY



Keeping Cool this Summer

As summer has come into full swing, the hottest part of the year has just begun. This is the time when issues concerning overexposure to heat begin to arise. While it may seem like a small issue, over-exposure to heat can cause a variety of health issues and problems; some of which can be deadly. Because of these concerns, it is necessary for everyone to be knowledgeable about how their bodies will react, and how to prevent overexposure to heat.

Risks of overexposure to heat:

- **Cramps:** Heat cramps are caused when heavy sweating depletes the body of salt and water. Heat cramps may be accompanied by hot, moist skin and a slightly elevated body temperature. Cramps in the arms, legs, or stomach can occur

while working, or relaxing after a shift. Heat cramps are a warning sign of heat stress.

- **Exhaustion:** Heat exhaustion is characterized by heavy sweating, strong thirst, cool and moist skin, a quick pulse, rapid breathing, nausea, a feeling of fatigue and a possibility of fainting. Heat exhaustion indicates that the body's ability to control heat is slowing down.
- **Heat stroke:** Heat stroke is a serious medical condition that can quickly result in unconsciousness. It occurs when the body loses salt and water to the point that sweating stops. Once the body's temperature control mechanism fails, body temperature increases rapidly. Symptoms include hot, dry, red-hued skin, tachycardia (rapid heart rate), difficulty breathing, dizziness, confusion, strange behavior, weakness and nausea. Left untreated, heat stroke can progress into convulsions, coma, loss of pulse and eventual death.

Helpful tips regarding heat exposure when working in hot weather:

- **Know your body!** Personal monitoring includes checking heart rate (should be below 110 BPM) and body temperature (below 100.4 degrees f) when conditions are conducive to overexposure. Although it may not be reasonable to do regular testing, it is important that people are aware of these factors so they can warn others that a potential problem may arise. These conditions are a warning to take a break to rehydrate and not just an issue of comfort.
- **Take breaks!** Taking breaks from working outdoors is often necessary in hot weather. In high-stress work situations, it is highly recommended that 15-minute breaks are taken hourly.
- **Stay hydrated!** People spending time outside, should rehydrate themselves as necessary. Water should be readily available, and everyone is encouraged to drink plenty of water in order to help prevent dehydration.
- **Dress correctly!** Appropriate clothing should be worn outdoors. Clothing should be lightweight, breathable, and light in color, in order to prevent heat buildup. Thin layers create air pockets to help keep the body cool.
- **Use sun block!** Regularly applying the correct type of sun block for your body type will help prevent sunburn, as well as lower your risk of contracting melanoma due to overexposure to the sun's radiation.

Enjoy your summer! Beat the heat!

