

Policy & Procedure Manual

HOT WEATHER PRECAUTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES – HR-XI-13

POLICY:

OPTIONS NORTHWEST will ensure that appropriate hot weather relief equipment (i.e. fans) and printed guidelines are provided for employees in each work environment.

All employees are expected to use available equipment and follow the procedural guidelines outlined in this policy for working in times of extreme heat.

All employees are to be aware of the early symptoms of heat illnesses.

PURPOSE:

1. To ensure a safe temperature in the work environment.
2. To prevent and manage heat-related illnesses.

PROCEDURE:

Residential Work Locations

1. Between April 1st and June 30th of each year, the supervisor of each area will be responsible for reviewing the Hot Weather Policy with their employees.
2. Employees are instructed to follow these procedures to cope with the hot weather in the work environment.
 - i. Drink plenty of cool fluids during hot weather even if not thirsty. Some examples of fluids to consume are decaffeinated tea, diluted fruit juices, water, fruit slushes and popsicles. Avoid caffeinated fluids such as coffee, tea and sodas.
 - ii. Ensure adequate nutrition and avoid hot, heavy meals. Foods that are high in water and require little or no preparation are encouraged. Use the oven only at cooler times of the day or during the night.
 - iii. Wear light-weight, non-restrictive, light-colored clothing. Natural fabrics such as cotton are best for absorbing perspiration, etc. Consider bringing a change of clothing during the intense hot weather. Change clothing if it becomes saturated.

- iv. Fill water packs with cold tap water and place it on your neck for intervals of up to 15 minutes and then remove it for 15 minutes and repeat this cycle as required. Place a cold, wet towel on your neck or on your head. This will help to cool down the body's core temperature.
- v. If the work area has an air conditioner installed, use this according to manufacturers' instructions. Employees must ensure the air conditioners are inspected and are in good working order prior to use according to procedural guidelines outlined in the Preventative Maintenance Policy. If no air conditioner is installed, or not working follow these steps: Windows and window coverings should be closed and remain closed during direct sunlight periods. Use ceiling and portable fans. Portable fans can be placed throughout the entire house. Good airflow will increase the evaporation and cooling of the skin.
- vi. For homes with heat recovery ventilators (HRV), ensure that they are being used in accordance with manufacturers specifications and are in good working order prior to use. Follow procedural guidelines outlined in the Preventative Maintenance Policy.
- vii. Adjust to the heat by performing a lighter workload and taking more frequent breaks during the intense heat. Heavy work should be scheduled for cooler parts of the day. Examples of this would be to consider bed baths for the people supported during intense heat or bath very early in the morning or late evening.
- viii. Plan outings for cooler times during the day, and to shady, breezy locations. Attempt to stay out of the direct sunlight, avoid excessive physical activity in the sun, wear hats, apply sunscreen as directed and use an umbrella for shade.
- ix. If you take prescribed medications discuss possible side effects from hot weather with your physician. Some types of medications can increase the skin's sensitivity to sunlight, i.e. antibiotics. Some medications can increase the loss of water in your body, i.e. laxatives, diuretics.
- x. If you have a history of medical problems, you should seek advice from your doctor in terms of how the intense heat will affect you and what precautions you should use under hot conditions.
- xi. Advise your supervisor or the supervisor on call if you are experiencing difficulties at work due to the extreme heat.

3. Supervisors/Managers/Directors may adjust scheduled shifts/work hours/routines in order for the work to be completed during the cooler part of the day.
4. Employees are to reference the First Aid manual available in all work areas for prevention, recognition and management of heat-related illness. NOTE: See Appendix A as a reference to health effects of heat stroke, as available through the Ontario Health Clinics for Ontario workers

Administrative Office

Administrative Office is equipped with air conditioning to assist with appropriate temperature control during hot weather conditions. Additional fans are available for use as required.

In general, during hot weather conditions, office personnel should follow the above noted residential work location procedures #2 i to iv, vii, ix to xi and #4.

RECOMMENDED BY: Manager, Human Resources
Coordinator, Health and Safety

APPENDICES: 1

OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Administration, Finance, Human Resources, Supportive Living Services (all)

ORIGINAL POLICY DATE: June 2002

AUTHORIZED BY: Executive Director

SIGNATURE:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. P. L.', is written over a horizontal line.

**Health Effects of Heat Stress***

| Health Effect | Symptoms | Treatment |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Heat Rash | Red bumpy rash with severe itching. | Change into dry clothes often and avoid hot environments. Rinse skin with cool water. Wash regularly to keep skin clean and dry. |
| Fainting | Sudden fainting after at least two hours of work; cool moist skin; weak pulse. | GET MEDICAL ATTENTION. Assess need for CPR. Move to a cool area; loosen clothing; make person lie down; and if the person is conscious, offer sips of cool water. Fainting may also be due to other illnesses. |
| Heat Cramps | Heat cramps are painful, involuntary muscle spasms that usually occur during heavy exercise in hot environments. Inadequate fluid intake often contributes to this problem. The spasms may be more intense and more prolonged than typical nocturnal leg cramps. Muscles most often affected include the calves, arms, abdomen, and back – although the cramps may involve any muscle group involved in the exercise. | If you suspect heat cramps: Rest briefly and cool down. Drink water or an electrolyte-containing sports drink. Practice gentle, range-of-motion stretching and gentle massage of the affected muscle group. |
| Heat Exhaustion | Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion often begin suddenly, sometimes after excessive exercise, perspiration and inadequate fluid intake. Features resemble shock and include: feeling faint, nausea, ashen appearance, rapid heartbeat, low blood pressure, hot, red, dry or sweaty skin, low-grade fever, generally less than 40°C. | If you suspect heat exhaustion: Get the person out of the sun and into a shady or an air-conditioned location. Lay the person down and elevate the feet slightly. Loosen or remove the individual's clothing. Have the person drink cold water, not iced, or a sports drink containing electrolytes. Cool the person by spraying him or her with cool water and fanning. Monitor the person carefully. Heat exhaustion can quickly become heatstroke. If fever — especially greater than 40°C — fainting, confusion or seizures occur, CALL FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE. |
| Heat Stroke | The main sign of heatstroke is a markedly elevated temperature — generally greater than 40°C — with hot, dry skin and changes in mental status ranging from personality changes to confusion and coma. Other signs may include: rapid heartbeat, rapid and shallow breathing, elevated or lowered blood pressure, cessation of sweating, irritability, confusion or unconsciousness, fainting, which can be the first sign in older adults. | If you suspect heatstroke: Move the person out of the sun and into a shady or an air-conditioned space. Dial 911 or CALL FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE. Cool the person by covering him or her with damp sheets or by spraying with cool water. Direct air onto the person with a fan or newspaper. |

* The items regarding heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke are copyright Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. All Rights reserved. Used with permission from www.mayoclinic.org. Heat Rash and Fainting adapted from Ontario Ministry of Labour Heat Stress Guideline: http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pdf/gl_heat.pdf (accessed Jun/14).

Vulnerability to Heat Stress: There are many permanent or temporary conditions (e.g. age, heart or lung conditions, dehydration, fatigue, some medications, etc.) that can make a person more vulnerable to heat strain. Despite these conditions, workers may be able to cope given adequate knowledge of the signs and symptoms of heat stress and, given the latitude to make the appropriate adjustments to their pace of work. It is more often the young, fit workers who may think they are invincible who succumb to heat strain. Some workers may need medical advice about what accommodations would be right for them.

Acclimatization: The MOL heat stress guideline states that "hot spells in Ontario seldom last long enough for workers to acclimatize". Workers performing "moderate" work (e.g. work with some pushing, lifting) would also not be assumed to be acclimatized by the same criteria, unless there is significant radiant heat associated with the work. Workers performing "heavy" work (e.g. shovelling dry sand), however, could probably be considered acclimatized once into the warm weather season. The acclimatized heavy work WBGT numbers are similar to the moderate unacclimatized. Since the TLV[®] is based on data derived from 20 year old males weighing an average of 154 lbs., "real" workers probably burn up more calories than the TLV[®] light category assumes. Selecting the "moderate" work category will account to some extent for workers who are somewhat dehydrated, older (e.g. over 40), not male, and somewhat heavier than 154 lbs.

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