



ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: *HEAT – YOUR EMPLOYEES SUMMER ENEMY*

O.S.H.A. identifies five heat-related illnesses that employers and employees need to recognize and understand their prevention. Here are the symptoms of each and what steps to take when treatment is necessary.

HEAT RASH – Happens when the skin is constantly wet with perspiration. It can become complicated by infection through scratching.

Symptoms: Itchy, reddish rash on skin. Normally appears on neck, upper chest and folds of skin.

Treatment and Prevention: Rest in a cool dry place allowing the skin to dry. Shower every day after work. Sleep in cool dry place overnight. To avoid infection of heat rash, resist the urge to scratch.

FAINTING – This is a problem especially for new employees who are not acclimated to working outside. It is also a problem for anyone who stands around outside, or is not moving much.

Symptoms: Dizziness, feeling faint

Treatment and Prevention: Moving around rather than standing still, usually reduces the possibility of fainting. Employees feeling faint should lie down in a cool place for short while.

HEAT CRAMPS – Occur when employees drink sufficient water but do not replace their body's salt.

Symptoms: Painful muscle spasms. This usually occurs in the arms, legs and/or stomach. Cramps may occur during or after work hours.

Treatment and Prevention: Employees should rest in cool shaded area. Wait a few hours before returning to strenuous work. Also worker can replace lost salts and minerals by drinking fluids containing salts, minerals and electrolytes. If cramps do not go away seek medical attention.

HEAT EXHAUSTION – Results from fluid loss and salt due to heavy perspiring. Affects workers who do not drink enough fluids, take in enough salt or both.

Symptoms: An employee experiencing heat exhaustion still perspires heavily. However, the employee feels extreme fatigue, giddiness, nausea, dizziness, thirst, fast heart beat or headache. The employee's skin will be clammy and moist, with a pale or flushed complexion and a body temperature that is normal or slightly elevated.

Treatment and Prevention: The employee should rest in a cool place and drink salted fluids.

Note: The employee should seek medical attention if there is loss of consciousness and/or signs or symptoms worsen or do not improve in 60 minutes.

HEAT STROKE – This is the most serious heat-stress illness because it can be fatal. A heat stroke can cause damage to the brain or other vital organs. Heat stroke occurs when the body is so over-heated that it is unable to regulate its core temperature. The body is unable to rid itself of excess heat.

Symptoms: Perspiration stops, fainting, mental confusion, delirium, loss of consciousness, convulsions, or coma, body temperature of 106° F or higher. The skin is red, hot, dry or bluish.

Treatment and Prevention: Call 911 Immediately!! Medical attention is critical for a heat stroke. Heat stroke is a medical emergency that can result in death. First-aid procedures include moving the employee to a cool place. Soak the employee's clothes with cool water, use ice packs, provide fluids (preferably water) and fan vigorously to increase cooling.

Provided by the ASA – Houston Chapter Safety Committee – AUGUST 2014

P.O. Box 924943 • Houston, Texas 77292 • ☎ 281.679.1877 • F 281.403.6302 • asahouston.org • asa@asahouston.org

American Subcontractors Association-Houston Chapter is a collective voice for a diverse membership committed to quality, safety, and ethics in construction. ASA-HC advocates for legislative reform and provides educational opportunities for the subcontracting community.