



Toolbox Talk: Summer Safety Extreme Heat

Introduction/Overview:

What comes to mind when you think of summer? Sitting on the beach enjoying the crashing of the waves and the breeze coming off the water? Maybe it's playing baseball, barbequing, or other outdoor activities. Whatever your thoughts on summer, most of us don't give much thought to how dangerous extreme heat can be.

Statistics:

There was an average of 131 heat-related fatalities each year, based on a 30-year average between 1987 and 2016, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Extreme heat causes more deaths annually than any other weather hazard. What is excessive heat? The Department of Homeland Security defines extreme heat as an extended period (2 to 3 days) of high heat and humidity with temperatures above 90 degrees. The American Red Cross adds "generally 10 degrees or more above average to this definition."

Warning signs of Heat-Related Conditions and What to Do:

Heat Cramps: Muscular pain, usually in the abdomen and legs.

- Get to a cooler place, get into a relaxed position.
- Drink liquids, preferably something with electrolytes, such as a sports drink, fruit juice, or milk. Water may also be given.

Heat Exhaustion: Cool moist, pale, ashen or flushed skin; headache; nausea; dizziness; weakness; and exhaustion.

- Move to a cooler place.
- Remove or loosen as much clothing as possible and apply cool, wet cloths to the skin. Fan or spray the person with water. Drink small amounts of liquids, preferably something with electrolytes, such as a sports drink, fruit juice, or milk. Water may also be given. Drink about 4 ounces of fluid every 15 minutes.
- If the person's condition does not improve or if he or she refuses water, has a change in consciousness, or vomits, **call 9-1-1**.

Heat Stroke: **A life-threatening condition!** Extremely high body temperature, red skin which may be dry or moist; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; rapid, shallow breathing; confusion; vomiting; and seizures.

Developed by:

- **CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY!**
- Immerse the person up to the neck in cool water. If this is not possible, spray cool water on him or her.
- Place ice packs or cool, wet towels on the neck, armpits, and groin.
- Do whatever you can to cool the body temperature.

Talking Points:

- Use the buddy system. Watch out for each other.
- Take frequent breaks in a cool area.
- Wear loose, light-colored clothing.
- Wear a hat or other loose headcover.
- Hydrate prior to working outside.
- Drink before you are thirsty. If you are feeling thirsty, you are behind in fluid replacement.
- Drink small amounts frequently, 8 ounces of water every 15-20 minutes.
- No more than 48 ounces of water per hour.
- Too much fluid intake too quickly flushes electrolytes, causing low salt in the blood.
- Avoid alcohol, coffee or other beverages that contain caffeine.

Additional Discussion Notes:

Final Thoughts:

Remember to rehydrate after your work is done, especially if you work in the heat on a regular basis. Chronic dehydration increases the risk for a number of medical conditions, such as kidney stones.

NOTE: Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please contact OWC or the Loss Control Innovations consultants for assistance.

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References:

[6 Things You Should Know About Heat Waves](#)

[Weather.com By Linda Lam](#)

[Extreme Heat](#)

[Official website of the Department of Homeland Security](#)

[Heat Wave Safety](#)

[American Red Cross](#)

[Heat Stress: Hydration](#)

[Centers for Disease Control](#)

