

MINNESOTA SAFETY HAZARD ALERT

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry
Occupational Safety and Health Division
443 Lafayette Road N.
St. Paul, MN 55155
1-877-470-OSHA

Heat-stress hazard July 2002



Heat stress may occur anytime in some industries or for only a few days during the summer during almost any work or play activity. Heat stress can result in several illnesses, decreased productivity and – potentially – death.

The most important factor in preventing heat stress is adequate water intake. Thirst is not an adequate indicator of hydration. When the body becomes dehydrated, it is difficult to rehydrate, because the body needs time to absorb water. Therefore, adequate water intake throughout the day is necessary. A person should drink five to seven ounces of cool water every 15 to 20 minutes. Under conditions of profuse sweating, commercial electrolyte replacement drinks may be appropriate.

A person should be aware of the typical symptoms of heat stress and know how to deal with them:

- If muscle spasms occur in the arms, legs or abdomen, drink water and eat salty foods.
- If fatigue, weakness, dizziness, faintness, nausea or headaches occur, move to a cool area and drink plenty of cold water.
- If loss of consciousness, rapid pulse or convulsions occur, call paramedics and start cooling the victim immediately. Remove the person to a cool area, soak them in cool water and use a fan to create air movement.

Heat stress can be a serious condition. To reduce the chances of it occurring, remember to drink plenty of fluids, pay attention to your body's response and act quickly if you are in stress.

