**Working in Hot Environments**

**Introduction**

When working in a high temperature environment there is a risk of heat stress, which is a term used to describe a range of ill health symptoms from fatigue through to potentially fatal heat stroke. When working in the sun there are added risks of sunburn and in the longer term, skin cancer.

Employers are responsible for protecting their employees from harm, so far as is reasonably practicable.

They must also assess the risks of work activities and implement measures to control the risks.

**Heat related illness**

•Fatigue – reduced concentration = risk of accidents/errors

•muscle cramps

•severe thirst - a late symptom of heat stress

•heat rash

•heat exhaustion - headaches, dizziness, nausea and fainting

•heat stroke (potentially fatal) - body temperature over 40oC, rapid pulse, confusion, loss of

consciousness, convulsions.

The graph below shows the likelihood of heat disorders with prolonged exposure to high temperature. As shown – high humidity makes working conditions more dangerous. Talks on..........Working in Hot Environments2016





**Working in Hot Environments**

**Risk assessments should identify**

* Who is at risk? Identify employees who are more susceptible to heat stress, for example due to illness/condition or medication.
* Which activities create a risk of heat stress, taking into account:
  + environmental temperature
  + work rate and duration
  + humidity
  + clothing usually worn
  + any PPE or respiratory protective equipment being worn.
* The risk control measures needed to reduce the risk to an acceptable level - can you eliminate, reduce, isolate or control the hazards identified?

**Controlling exposure to excess heat**

* Control the temperature, e.g. air conditioning, fans, provide shelter
* reduce the amount of time each worker is exposed to the risk
* frequent rest breaks in a cool environment
* work at a cooler time of day
* prevent dehydration
* provide the right personal protective equipment, e.g. breathable fabric, sun protecting fabric,
* sun hats, sunscreen etc.
* relax uniform requirements/ dress codes
* ensure staff understand the risks and the symptoms
* be prepared for first aid emergencies – first aiders understand symptoms and treatments
* provide mechanical aids to reduce the work rate.

**Employee awareness**

* Look out for signs and symptoms in yourself and colleagues
* Take sensible precautions, e.g. take rest breaks in shade/ cooler environment, use sun screen or cover up
* Drink water little and often.
* Stop work if you feel dizzy, exhausted or confused and speak to a first aider.
* If regularly working in the sun, check your skin for signs of cancer such as discolouration and moles which grow or bleed.

Talks on..........Working in Hot Environments20

**Please read the handout carefully. Answer the following questions and give this page back to the person providing the toolbox talk.**

**Q: Which one of these is the most serious heat illness?**

1. Heat stroke
2. Heat exhaustion
3. Heat fatigue

**A:** ........................................................................................................

**Q: Name three ways of controlling exposure to excess heat:**

**A:** ........................................................................................................

**A:** ........................................................................................................

**A:** ........................................................................................................

I have read and understood the information set out above: Name: ........................................................

Signature: ..................................................

Date: ..........................................................

**Disclaimer**

Toolbox Talks are provided for general guidance on matters of interest. In making these documents available to a general and diverse audience it is not possible to anticipate the requirements or the hazards of any particular subscriber’s business. Users are therefore advised to carefully evaluate the contents and adapt the Toolbox Talks to suit the requirements of each situation or activity.

**Date: Project:**

**Topic: Working in Hot Environments**

**Given by:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Print Name** | **Sign Name** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Feedback from site** |
|  |