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## **Worker Justice Center of New York: Heat Stress Training**

**Workshop Objective:** To encourage farm workers to develop an understanding of heat exhaustion and heat stroke so that they can better protect themselves, recognize symptoms and advocate for safe working conditions.

### **Workshop Materials Needed:**

- Pre-post tests, sign-in sheet, Evaluation Sheet, OSHA heat handout Factsheet
- Flip-chart paper
- cardboard sun, farm worker clothing (for actor), water cooler, some type of shade (umbrella, cloth etc)
- scenario on index card to read out loud

### **Introduction:**

- The presenters introduce themselves and explain who we are and what we hope to do during our time together.
- Each person introduces him or herself. Please share your name, where you are from and something that makes you unique: for example, a talent that you have, something you like to do for fun, or a place you have visited. Please also share what type of work you do.
- Pass around the sign-in sheet.

**Note to trainers:** The trainers must ensure that the information on the OSHA approved sign-in sheet is filled out with training date, training location, training topic/activities, time start, time end, trainer's name, translator's name if applicable, and have the eligible attendees enter their name, sign and provide a phone number or provide other means for a follow-up evaluation. You should let them know that staff will be calling them in 6 to 8 weeks after to talk about the training they attended. Once the sign-in sheet is filled, trainers are to certify (confirm or attest as true) that the information

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recorded on the sign-in sheet is accurate. Trainers are to distribute the OSHA approved evaluation sheets and ensure that the heading on the evaluation sheet is filled out such as date of training, name of trainers, topic covered

### Evaluation of existing knowledge:

- **Pre-test** (5 minutes) – see attached pre-test
- **Discussion** (10 minutes)

### Discussion:

Ask the participants the following questions and discuss briefly.

- What is it like working in the heat all day?
- What do you do to stay cool?
- What is the average normal body temperature?
  - 98.6 F or 37 C
- How does the body acquire heat?
  - *Through the work of the muscles, chemical reaction in the body, and environmental heat. If the body acquires too much heat, it must release it to prevent the internal temperature from rising too high.*
- How does the body release heat?
  - Answers may include: *Sweat, Touching something colder, Moving into a colder environment (air-conditioning/shade/cold shower), Fanning oneself/standing in the breeze*

*Facilitators note: The answers can be connected to the concepts of **evaporation** (sweat), **conduction** (transferring heat to a colder object), **convection** (“lifting” of heat by moving air), **radiation** (the body’s natural release of heat in the environment).*

- What happens when the body gets so hot it can’t release enough heat?
  - *When our internal body temperature gets hotter than normal it puts a strain on the body and is called **heat stress**. This can often happen when people work out in the fields all day without drinking enough water or taking breaks in the shade. Heat stress results in different symptoms that are categorized into different heat related illnesses based on their severity.*

### Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion

Show the two slides of Heat Exhaustion from AFOP’s Proyecto Sol training. Ask people to look at the pictures and name some of the symptoms of heat exhaustion.

- sweating a lot
- dry mouth

- extreme thirst
- headaches or dizziness
- lightheadedness
- mood changes or irritability
- rapid breathing
- chills
- fainting or weakness
- heat cramps
- nausea
- decreased or dark-colored urine
- pale, moist skin

### **What happens if heat exhaustion goes untreated?**

- *If the body is not able to cool down a person may experience **heat stroke**.*
- *Heat stroke is very dangerous and can even result in death. The body loses its normal ability to cool itself and the internal organs may be damaged.*

### **Symptoms of Heat Stroke**

- Show the two slides of Heat Stroke from AFOP's Proyecto Sol training.
- Ask people to look at the pictures and name some of the symptoms of heat exhaustion.
  - *Extremely high body temperatures*
  - *Confusion or aggressive behavior*
  - *Seizures or convulsions*
  - *Coma, in the most serious situations*
  - *Being unresponsive to noise/clapping*
  - *Lack of sweating*
  - *Dizziness*
  - *Fast pulse*
  - *Dry, hot, red skin (looks like sunburn)*
- One of the main ways to tell the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke is by the level of confusion the person is experiencing. If they cannot answer basic questions such as "What is your name?", "What day is this?", or "Where are we?" you should assume that he or she is suffering from heat stroke.

### **What to do if someone is suffering from heat exhaustion or heat stroke**

This scenario can simply be read aloud, or it can be read aloud and acted out.

If acted out bring: cardboard sun, farmworker clothing (for actor), water cooler, some type of shade (umbrella, cloth etc).

*Even though Fernando was out drinking last night, he still manages to wake up at 5am to get out to the fields at an early hour. He packs two bottles of water and puts on a dark-colored long-sleeved shirt. He arrives at the fields at 7am and starts to pick onions. The temperature quickly rises to a stifling 100 F by 11am. To harvest as much as possible, Fernando doesn't take any breaks. While Fernando had prepared and brought water, he is thirstier than he realized he would be and finishes it by 10 am. Around 11:30, Fernando begins to feel tired and dizzy. Thinking nothing of it, he keeps working. Soon after, Fernando faints in the fields, where you, his coworkers find him.*

If acting out the scenario, ask for volunteers to intervene and “continue the story” by treating the person. If not, have the participants talk through their responses. Review the proper steps below.

For higher literacy groups: Split the participants into groups and give each group cut outs of the following, or brainstorm with the group the answers and discuss the order:

1. Stop working
2. Immediately move the person to the shade and have them rest lying down
3. Give the person tepid water, in small amounts. Have them drink as much as possible.
4. Splash the person's body with water.
5. Loosen all clothing, especially around the neck, chest and waist.
6. Use a hat, shirt or cardboard to fan the person.
7. Stay with the person
8. If the person does not improve, or if the person has lost consciousness, call for medical help immediately.

Have each group place these steps in the order they believe to be appropriate. Then go over the steps in the correct order.

- *If Fernando does not regain consciousness quickly, he is likely suffering from heat stroke.*
- *In the event of heat stroke, you must cool the body as quickly as possible by pouring cool water on the chest and applying wet cloth to the body. If there is ice, it can be placed in the armpits or groin. Only give the person water if they are not vomiting or unconscious. Elevate the person's legs. To avoid cooling the person too drastically, massage the limbs and remove ice and wet cloths if they begin to shiver. Seek medical help immediately, but continually cool the body.*
- *Whether a person is suffering from heat exhaustion or heat stroke DO NOT give the person salt or let them continue working.*

## **Protect Yourself From Heat Stress**

- **How could Fernando have avoided heat stress?** What should he do differently?
  - *Avoid alcohol*
  - *Wear proper clothing (light-weight, light colors)*
  - *Drink enough water*
  - *Take breaks in the shade*
  - *Assert his right to drinking water and rest*

## OSHA

OSHA stands for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

- The purpose of OSHA is to ensure safe and healthy workplaces for all workers, regardless of immigration status.
- Workers can ask OSHA to inspect their workplace if they believe that there are serious hazards. Workers are encouraged to speak with the inspector in private during an OSHA visit.
- OSHA covers dairy workers while the New York Worker Protection Standard does not.

*Optional alternative exercise for this section:* print out a copy of these rights and distribute one right to each participant in the room. Pair up participants, ask them to take 2 minutes to read the rights they received to each other and briefly discuss to make sure they understand it. Then ask each group to present their rights to the audience.

The Occupation Safety and Health Administration is a federal agency whose sole purpose is to ensure safe workplaces for all workers. They have had an active campaign on Heat Safety called “Water. Rest. Shade.” There is also an independent campaign that would prohibit people from working on days of extreme heat. In New York there are laws that guarantee that workers have a safe work environment. For farmworkers this includes having access to clean drinking water in the fields.

If you experience unsafe working conditions you have the right to make an anonymous complaint with OSHA. If you are considering making a complaint and would like to talk with a lawyer or legal assistant about your rights and options, call the Worker Justice Center. We can make a complaint on your behalf.

**Workers' rights under the OSH Act:** Workers are entitled to [working conditions](#) that do not pose a risk of serious harm. To help assure a safe and healthful workplace, OSHA also provides workers with the right to:

- Ask OSHA to inspect their workplace;
- Us Receive information and training about hazards, methods to prevent harm, and the OSHA standards that apply to their workplace. The training must be in a language you can understand;
- Get copies of test results done to find hazards in the workplace;
- Review records of work-related injuries and illnesses;
- Get copies of their medical records;

**File a Complaint** Workers, or their representatives, may file a complaint and ask OSHA to inspect their workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or that their employer is not following OSHA standards. A worker can tell OSHA not to let their employer know who filed the complaint. It is a violation of the Act for an employer to fire, demote, transfer or discriminate in any way against a worker for filing a complaint or using other OSHA rights. You can file a complaint online; download the form [En Espanol\*] and mail or fax it to the nearest OSHA office; or call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742). Most complaints sent in on line may be resolved informally over the phone with your employer. Written complaints that are signed by a worker or their representative and submitted to the closest OSHA office are more likely to result in an on-site OSHA inspection. If you send in a complaint requesting an OSHA inspection, you have the right to find out the results of the OSHA inspection and request a review if OSHA decides not to issue citations.

**What Information Must the Employee Provide?** Employees or their representatives must provide enough information for OSHA to determine that a hazard probably exists. Workers do not have to know whether a specific OSHA standard has been violated in order to file a complaint. The following are examples of the type of information that would be useful to OSHA when receiving a complaint. It is not necessary to have the answers to all these questions in order to file a complaint. The list is provided here as a guide to help you provide as much complete and accurate information as possible:

- How many employees work at the site and how many are exposed to the hazard?
- How and when are workers exposed?
- What work is performed in the unsafe or unhealthful area?
- What type of equipment is used? Is it in good condition?
- What materials and/or chemicals are used?
- Have employees been informed or trained regarding hazardous conditions?
- What process and/or operation is involved?
- What kinds of work are done nearby?
- How often and for how long do employees work at the task that leads to their exposure?
- How long (to your knowledge) has the condition existed?
- Have any attempts been made to correct the problem?

- On what shifts does the hazard exist?
- Has anyone been injured or made ill as a result of this problem?
- Have there been any "near-miss" incidents?
- Specific question for health hazards: Do any employees have any symptoms that they think are caused by the hazardous condition or substance?
- Specific question for health hazards: Have any employees been treated by a doctor for a work-related disease or condition? What was it?

**You Cannot be Punished or Discriminated against for using your OSHA Rights** The OSH Act protects workers who complain to their employer, OSHA or other government agencies about unsafe or unhealthful working conditions in the workplace or environmental problems. You cannot be transferred, denied a raise, have your hours reduced, be fired, or punished in any other way because you used any right given to you under the OSHA Act. Help is available from OSHA for whistleblowers. If you have been punished or discriminated against for using your rights, you must file a complaint with OSHA within 30 days of the alleged reprisal for most complaints. No form is required, but you must send a letter or call the OSHA Area Office nearest you to report the discrimination (within 30 days of the alleged discrimination).

**What to do if there is a Dangerous Situation at Work** If you believe working conditions are unsafe or unhealthful, we recommend that you bring the conditions to your employer's attention, if possible. You may file a complaint with OSHA concerning a hazardous working condition at any time. However, you should not leave the worksite merely because you have filed a complaint. If the condition clearly presents a risk of death or serious physical harm, there is not sufficient time for OSHA to inspect, and, where possible, you have brought the condition to the attention of your employer, you may have a legal right to refuse to work in a situation in which you would be exposed to the hazard.

**Not covered by the OSH Act:** Immediate family members of farm employers that do not employ outside employees and Workplace Hazards regulated by another Federal agency (for example, the Mine Safety and Health Administration, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Coast Guard).

## **Post-Test & Evaluation**

### **Closing**

Discuss one highlight from the workshop and one thing you learned or will do differently in the future. Review the post test as a group to make sure all know the key points of the presentation.