Heat-related illness can be prevented. OSHA does not have a specific standard that covers working in hot environments. Nonetheless, under the OSH Act, employers have a duty to protect workers from recognized serious hazards in the workplace, including heat-related hazards. This guide helps employers and worksite supervisors prepare and implement hot weather plans. It explains how to use the heat index to determine when extra precautions are needed at a worksite to protect workers from environmental contributions to heat-related illness. Workers performing strenuous activity, workers using heavy or non-breathable protective clothing, and workers who are new to an outdoor job need additional precautions beyond those warranted by heat index alone.
Heat Kills - 2

NOAA devised the heat index values for shaded conditions and light winds. Full sunshine can increase heat index values by up to 15° Fahrenheit. Strenuous work and the use of heavy or non-breathable clothing or impermeable chemical protective clothing should not be conducted when the heat index is at or above 115°F.

Important consideration: NOAA devised the heat index values for shaded conditions and light winds. Full sunshine can increase heat index values by up to 15° Fahrenheit. Strenuous work and the use of heavy or non-breathable clothing or impermeable chemical protective clothing should not be conducted when the heat index is at or above 115°F.

If essential work must be done, in addition to the steps listed above:
- Alert workers of extreme heat hazards
- Establish drinking water schedule (about 4 cups/hour)
- Develop and enforce protective work/rest schedules
- Conduct physiological monitoring (e.g., pulse, temperature, etc.)
- Stop work if essential control methods are inadequate or unavailable.

Recommendations for Lower Risk when HI < 91°F
- Provide drinking water
- Ensure that adequate medical services are available
- Plan ahead for times when heat index is higher, including worker heat safety training
- Encourage workers to wear sunscreen
- Acclimate workers

Recommendations for Moderate Risk when HI is between 91°F to 103°F
- Remind workers to drink water often (about 4 cups/hour)
- Review heat-related illness topics with workers: how to recognize heat-related illness, how to prevent it, and what to do if someone gets sick
- Schedule frequent breaks in a cool, shaded area
- Acclimate workers
- Set up buddy system/instruct supervisors to watch for signs of heat-related illness

If workers must wear heavy protective clothing, perform strenuous activity or work in the direct sun, additional precautions are recommended to protect workers from heat-related illness.
- Schedule activities at a time when the heat index is lower
- Develop work/rest schedules
- Monitor workers closely

Recommendations for High Risk when HI is between 103°F to 115°F
- Alert workers of high risk conditions
- Actively encourage workers to drink plenty of water (about 4 cups/hour)
- Limit physical exertion (e.g., use mechanical lifts)
- Have a knowledgeable person at the worksite who is well-informed about heat-related illness and able to determine appropriate work/rest schedules
- Establish and enforce work/rest schedules
- Adjust work activities (e.g., reschedule work, pace/rotate jobs)
- Use cooling techniques
- Watch/communicate with workers at all times

When possible, reschedule activities to a time when heat index is lower

Important consideration: NOAA devised the heat index values for shaded conditions and light winds. Full sunshine can increase heat index values by up to 15° Fahrenheit. Strenuous work and the use of heavy or specialized protective clothing also have an additive effect. As a result, the risk at a specific heat index could be higher than that listed in the table above if the work is in direct sunlight without a light breeze, or if work involves strenuous tasks or the use of heavy or specialized protective clothing. Extra measures, including implementing precautions at the next risk level, are necessary under these circumstances.