Prevent Heat Illness at Work

Outdoor and indoor heat exposure can be dangerous.

Nearly 3 out of 4 heat illness fatalities happen during the first week of work. New and returning workers need to build tolerance to heat by taking frequent breaks and working shorter shifts in the heat to start.

Dangerous heat exposure can occur indoors or outdoors, in any season. Employers can keep workers safe by following these simple safety practices:

- **Follow the 20% Rule** — on the 1st day, don’t allow employees to work more than 20% of a shift at full intensity in the heat. Increase their time by no more than 20% a day until they are used to working in the heat.
- **Provide cool drinking water** — encourage workers to drink at least one cup every 20 minutes, even if they are not thirsty.
- **Rest breaks** — allow workers time to recover from heat in a shady or cool location.
- **Dress for the heat** — have workers wear a hat and light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing if possible.
- **Watch out for each other** — encourage workers to monitor themselves and others for signs of heat illness.
- **Look for any signs of heat illness**, including fainting, dizziness, nausea, and muscle spasms, and act quickly — when in doubt, call 911.
- **Offer training** on the hazards of heat exposure and how to prevent illness.
- **Develop an Emergency Action Plan** on what to do if a worker shows signs of heat-related illness.

To learn more about heat illness prevention and first aid, visit [www.osha.gov/heat](http://www.osha.gov/heat).