



Preventing Heat-Related Illness

With longer hot and humid days comes an increase in heat-related illnesses and injuries. *What may be reported as a broken wrist due to a worker losing his balance and falling from a ladder, may actually be caused by the worker fainting due to overheating.*

While heat-related illness claims are most common among construction workers, landscapers, agriculture workers and others that work in an outdoor environment, there are other industries that can be affected by heat including warehouse and factory workers. The combination of heat and humidity that is common in Florida is especially hazardous. The problem is that performing labor-intensive activities in hot weather can raise body temperatures beyond levels that can be cooled by sweating. The loss prevention team has been busy educating policyholders on the hazards of working outdoors in the summer heat and emphasizing prevention methods.

What are the dangers?

If you work in hot conditions, you can be at risk of several heat-related illnesses. The following are heat-related illnesses and what to look for:

- **Heat rash** consists of red, irritated bumps and is a sign that hot conditions are affecting your body.
- **Heat syncope** (fainting) can occur when a person is not used to working in a hot environment.
- **Heat cramps** are caused by a loss of salt when sweating. Severe cramps may require a visit to a medical professional.
- **Heat exhaustion** occurs if you have lost too much fluid, salt, or both through sweating.
- **Heatstroke** occurs when the body's natural cooling processes stop working, and the ill person stops sweating. Symptoms of heatstroke include very hot and dry skin, confusion, convulsions, seizures, and loss of consciousness. Heatstroke is very serious and can lead to death.

What can you do to keep cool?

All of these heat-related illnesses can be easily prevented by taking the following steps while working in hot conditions:

- Drink plenty of water throughout the day. In hot conditions, you should aim for about 1 cup every 15 to 20 minutes.
- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing.
- Drink sports drinks to help replace the salt you lose when you sweat.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can both cause dehydration.
- Take frequent breaks in a cool, shady place.
- If the temperature spikes suddenly or you are new to working in hot conditions, take more frequent breaks, and gradually build up your workload while your body adapts.
- If you notice yourself experiencing symptoms of heat illness, tell your supervisor, and take a break in a cool, shaded area.