



# Heat Illness Prevention

## The CompWest Difference

CompWest customers are assigned a dedicated loss control consultant to identify and address loss trends while serving as a safety resource.

Heat illness can be deadly – in fact every year, thousands of workers become sick or even die from exposure to heat. Heat illnesses and deaths are preventable. Employers are responsible for providing workplaces that are safe from excessive heat. What is heat illness?

The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken such as drinking water frequently and resting in the shade or air conditioning. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke requires immediate medical attention and can result in death.

### How can heat illness be prevented?

Employers should establish a complete heat illness prevention program to prevent heat illness. This includes: provide workers with water, rest and shade; gradually increase workloads and allow more frequent breaks for new workers or workers who have been away for a week or more to build a tolerance for working in the heat (acclimatization); modify work schedules

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as necessary; plan for emergencies and train workers about the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and their prevention; and monitor workers for signs of illness. Workers new to the heat or those that have been away from work and are returning can be most vulnerable to heat stress and they must be acclimatized.

**To prevent heat related illness and fatalities:**

- Drink water every 15 minutes, even if you are not thirsty.
- Rest in the shade to cool down.
- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing.
- Learn the signs of heat illness and what to do in an emergency.
- Keep an eye on fellow workers.
- “Easy does it” on your first days of work in the heat. You need to get used to it.

If workers are new to working in the heat or returning from more than a week off, and for all workers on the first day of a sudden heat wave, implement a work schedule to allow them to get used to the heat gradually.

**Who is affected?**

Any worker exposed to hot and humid conditions is at risk of heat illness, especially those doing heavy work tasks or using bulky protective clothing and equipment. Some workers might be at greater risk than others if they have not built up a tolerance to hot conditions, including new workers, temporary workers, or those returning to work after a week or more off. This also includes everyone during a heat wave.

Industries most affected by heat-related illness are: construction; trade, transportation and utilities; agriculture; building, grounds maintenance; landscaping services; and support activities for oil and gas operations.

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