

Work Outside? Beware Of Summer Heat

With the warmest days of summer yet to come, the U.S. Department of Labor is stepping up efforts to spread the word about heat-related illness prevention: for those who work outdoors, high temperatures can lead to serious health consequences.

OSHA Outreach Initiative

High temperatures are responsible for more deaths than any other type of weather phenomenon. This summer, the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration ("OSHA") has undertaken a nationwide campaign to educate workers and their employers about the dangers of heat-related illnesses.

OSHA has produced a range of education materials in both English and Spanish and is distributing them in conjunction with a workplace training curriculum on how to prevent and treat heat illness. A new OSHA website has also been established detailing how workers can be protected from hot weather, and weather service alerts for heat will now include worker safety measures.

Tips and Warning Signs

Heat exhaustion, if left unchecked, can quickly devolve into heat stroke, a potentially deadly illness that killed at least 30 workers last year.

But, these deaths are preventable. To avoid heat exhaustion, anyone working outside on a hot day should drink water often, take periodic rest breaks in the shade, and wear loose, light clothing. Implementing a "buddy system" can also be beneficial; heat-related illnesses often cause confusion or

loss of consciousness, so coworkers should monitor each other for symptoms.

There are a number of conditions that should raise red flags: someone suffering from heavy sweating, cramps, headache, nausea, or weakness could have heat exhaustion. If any of these symptoms are severe or worsen, medical attention should be sought. But, resting, drinking cool beverages, or even a cool shower may be enough to stop heat exhaustion if it is caught early.

Heat stroke victims may have an extremely high temperature, red, hot skin that is no longer producing sweat, a rapid pulse, and they may act confused or disorientated. Emergency personnel should be contacted at the first signs of heat stroke, and the victim should be cooled as quickly as possible (by taking a cool shower, being sprayed with cool water, etc.).

Job-related Injuries

If you work outdoors and have suffered from a heat illness, remember that workers' compensation may be available. Contact an experienced workers' compensation attorney in your area today to find out more.