



# Acclimating to Summer Heat for New Outdoor Workers

## Importance of Acclimation to Hot Work Environments

### Why Acclimation Matters

For employees new to outdoor work, especially during the summer months, acclimating to the heat is crucial for their safety and health. Sudden exposure to high temperatures can lead to serious heat-related illnesses, which can be dangerous and even fatal. Acclimation helps the body gradually adapt to increased temperatures, reducing the risk of heat stress, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

### Risks of Inadequate Acclimation

- **Heat Stress:** Can cause dehydration, fatigue, and muscle cramps.
- **Heat Exhaustion:** Leads to heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, nausea, and fainting.
- **Heat Stroke:** A medical emergency characterized by high body temperature, confusion, loss of consciousness, and possible death if not treated promptly.

## Protecting Workers from Heat

### Gradual Acclimation Process

1. **Start Slowly:** Begin with short work periods in the heat, gradually increasing the duration over 7-14 days.
2. **Increase Exposure:** For new workers, start with 20% of the usual work duration in the heat on the first day, increasing by 20% each subsequent day.
3. **Monitor Conditions:** Keep track of temperature, humidity, and heat index to plan work schedules accordingly.

### General Protection Measures

1. **Hydration:**
  - Encourage drinking water every 15-20 minutes, even if not thirsty.
  - Avoid caffeine and alcohol which can dehydrate the body.
2. **Clothing:**
  - Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, and breathable clothing.
  - Use hats and UV-protective sunglasses.
3. **Breaks:**
  - Schedule frequent rest breaks in shaded or cool areas.
  - Use air-conditioned rest areas if available.
4. **Sunscreen:**
  - Apply sunscreen with at least SPF 30 to protect from harmful UV rays.
5. **Work Scheduling:**
  - Avoid strenuous tasks during peak heat hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.).
  - Rotate job functions to minimize heat exposure for each worker.

## Recognizing and Responding to Heat Illness

### Symptoms of Heat Illness

- **Heat Stress:** Excessive sweating, thirst, muscle cramps.
- **Heat Exhaustion:** Heavy sweating, weakness, cold, pale, and clammy skin, fast and weak pulse, nausea or vomiting, fainting.
- **Heat Stroke:** High body temperature (above 103°F), hot, red, dry or moist skin, rapid and strong pulse, possible unconsciousness.



### **Emergency Response**

1. **Move to Cooler Area:** Immediately move the affected worker to a cooler, shaded area.
2. **Hydrate:** Provide water or electrolyte drinks if the worker is conscious and able to drink.
3. **Cool Down:** Use cool cloths, fans, or a cool bath to lower body temperature.
4. **Seek Medical Help:**
  - For heat exhaustion, monitor the worker closely and seek medical advice if symptoms worsen or do not improve.
  - For heat stroke, call emergency services immediately. Heat stroke is a medical emergency and requires prompt treatment.

### **Supervisor Responsibilities**

- **Training:** Ensure all employees are trained to recognize and respond to heat illness. This training is provided in the form of online CBT, safety alerts, and toolbox talks.
- **Procedures:** Notify workers of the location of the heat illness prevention program- [www.iws.support](http://www.iws.support)
- **Monitoring:** Regularly monitor workers for signs of heat-related illnesses, especially those new to the environment.

By following these guidelines, we can help new outdoor workers safely acclimate to summer heat, reducing the risk of heat-related illnesses and ensuring a safe and healthy work environment.