POTENTIAL RISKS FOR WORKING IN HEAT

When assessing the risk to workers' health from working in heat, **personal and environmental factors should be considered.**

The following factors may increase the risk of heat-related illness:

- Work being done outside or in a roof cavity, especially during the day and in summer can put workers at higher risk of heat-related illness. Radiant temperatures may be higher when working in the sun on a concrete or metal roof, or near hot machinery.
- Minimal air movement in confined or poorly ventilated spaces can make workers feel hotter. Humidity makes it harder for a person to cool down.
- If there is no access to air conditioning, shelter or cool drinking water, workers may also be at a higher risk of dehydration.
- If working alone or remotely, the worker may not be able to seek help, access first aiders or emergency services. Heat-related illness can be fatal if left untreated.
- During a heat wave, hot days and nights can contribute to worker fatigue.
- An apprentice may take longer to do tasks, exposing them and their supervisor to heat for a longer time.
- Workers with medical conditions, who are younger (under 25), older (over 54) and less physically fit may be at a higher risk of heat-related illness.
- Clothing, such as uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE), may impair the evaporation of sweat.
- Workers who are not acclimatised, or are returning to work after an absence can be more affected by heat.
- Sunburn can occur in as little as 11 minutes and whether serious or mild, can cause permanent and irreversible skin damage.
- Work being carried out for an extended period of time or requires high amounts of physical exertion increases risk of heat-related illness.

You must do everything that is reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks associated with working in heat. This may include:

- Rescheduling tasks to cooler parts of the day or year, and
- Waiting for hot conditions to pass.

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POTENTIAL RISKS FOR

WORKING IN HEAT

If you cannot eliminate the risk, you must minimise it as much as reasonably practicable. You may find a combination of controls to be the most effective. Some examples of controls are outlined below.

- Reorganise outdoor work so that workers carry out alternative tasks, rotate work or work in shade, particularly around 11 am–3 pm when heat and solar ultraviolet radiation is the most intense.
- Where possible, use plant or other equipment to reduce manual labour.
- Provide fans and shaded or air-conditioned break areas.
- Provide accessible, cool drinking water, or when necessary, electrolyte solutions. Encourage frequent water breaks.
- Where possible, don't allow workers to work alone. If they must, then establish procedures for monitoring them and ensuring they can easily seek help.
- Provide information, training and instruction to workers on how to follow safe work procedures, report problems and recognise the symptoms of heat-related illness.
- Provide suitable PPE like a wide brim hat, and sunscreen. Modify the uniform or PPE so that the fabric is lighter and more breathable.

Further Information

Guide for managing the risks of working in heat

First aid for heat-related illness

Checklist for risk-managing heat in the workplace

Code of practice: Managing the Work Environment and Facilities

Code of practice: First aid in the workplace

Guidance material: Guide on exposure to solar ultraviolet radiation

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's heat stress basic calculator

Bureau of Meteorology's Heatwave Service for Australia

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