

## Heat Illness and Injury Guidelines

Please remember that any heat related loss of consciousness, collapse, loss of coordination, dazedness, or confusion should be treated as heat stroke, **a medical emergency**, and emergency attention should be immediately sought.

The guidelines below are basic in nature and cannot anticipate what is happening in an actual situation. Immediate action to cool the individual must start as soon as possible. If arrangements for transportation are being made the cooling process must be taking place at the same time.

If the individual is to be transported by private vehicle cooling treatment must be continued, which means that two people will be needed, one to drive and one to monitor the individual and assist with the cooling processes listed below.

**With ongoing high temperatures, potential sun overexposure and inadequate water intake; our employee owners and the employees of the subcontractors are at risk for the following:**

### **Dehydration**

We all need plenty of water to keep our bodies performing, and to help us cool down in the heat. So a safe supply of water must be available to all employees throughout the workday. Additionally employees must drink plenty of water while away from the job site. Hydrate for tomorrow today!

To prevent dehydration employees should be encouraged to drink water regularly throughout the day. Thirst is actually a symptom of dehydration and not a reliable early indicator of the body's need for fluids. If you're thirsty you're already behind! Additionally, employees should monitor their urine output and color: the goal is a pale yellow color, darker colors indicate inadequate hydration. This applies to ALL employees! Individuals in office environments are often inadequately hydrated without realizing it, and even mild dehydration will impact your wellness. Remember, caffeinated drinks, high sugar drinks, energy drinks, and sports drinks (in large quantities) are not effective for rehydration. In excess these drinks can all contribute to dehydration. The simple solution is simple water.

***A note about water:*** *In individuals suffering from dehydration or heat injuries, ice cold water should be avoided if possible, as it may cause vomiting and complicate the situation.*

### **Heat Injuries**

All Heat Injuries are a medical concern, and all employees suffering heat injuries need to be evaluated by medical personnel. During initial treatment a plan of action for medical evaluation should be established. Based on the employee's condition civilian or medical transport can be

utilized. All heat injuries are subject to rapid change and everyone should be ready to dial 911 if the individual's condition worsens.

## **Heat Cramps**

Brought on by an imbalance of electrolytes, usually a result of excessive sweating, heat cramps are characterized by painful cramps of the muscles, usually the large muscles of the legs and abdomen. Individuals with heat cramps may complain of muscle cramps, heavy sweating, and extreme thirst.

Actions:

- All heat injuries need to be evaluated by medical personnel.
- Move the individual to a cool, shady area if possible, move to an air conditioned office or vehicle.
- Loosen any restrictive clothing or footwear to promote blood flow.
- Allow the individual to slowly drink cool water (not ice cold).
- Monitor the individual and encourage them to continue sipping water until evaluated by medical personnel.

## **Heat Exhaustion**

Heat Exhaustion is brought on by water loss through sweat, without sufficient water replacement. It may result in heavy sweating with pale, moist, cool skin, headache, weakness, dizziness, and possible loss of appetite.

Actions:

- All heat injuries need to be evaluated by medical personnel.
- Move the individual to a cool, shady area. If possible, move to an air conditioned office or vehicle.
- Loosen any restrictive clothing or footwear to promote blood flow.
- Pour water on the individual and fan to promote cooling; if available apply ice or ice packs lightly wrapped in cloth. As possible apply first to pulse points at neck, armpits, wrist and groin.
- Elevate the individual's legs.
- Allow the individual to slowly drink cool water (not ice cold).
- Monitor the individual and encourage them to continue sipping water until evaluated by medical personnel.
- After evaluation the individual should not be involved in strenuous activity for the remainder of the day.

## Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is a MEDICAL EMERGENCY. If an employee is suspected of heat stroke 911 should be immediately called. Delay in treatment of heat stroke can lead to rapid deterioration and death, and *any* suspicion of heat stroke should be treated as heat stroke until medical evaluation. Heat stroke is the result of the body's cooling system failing, as such, without treatment the individual cannot recover their normal body temperature. Employees working in hot or hot and humid environments for lengthy times, without adequate water consumption are subject to heat stroke. Symptoms include sweating or flushed, hot, dry skin; weakness, dizziness, confusion, headaches, seizures, nausea, rapid respiration, and weak pulse. Irritable, irrational or combative behavior may occur and collapse or unconsciousness may occur suddenly.

### Actions:

- Heat stroke is a MEDICAL EMERGENCY, seek immediate medical attention.
- Move the individual to a cool, shady area. If possible, move to an air conditioned office or vehicle.
- Loosen any restrictive clothing or footwear to promote blood flow. If possible remove outer and protective clothing.
- Cooling efforts should begin immediately. Immerse in cool water or pour water on the individual and fan to promote cooling; if available apply ice or ice packs lightly wrapped in cloth. As possible apply first to pulse points at neck, armpits, wrist and groin.
- Elevate the individual's legs
- Massage the individual's arms and legs to promote blood flow.
- If conscious, allow the individual to slowly drink cool water (not ice cold).
- Continuously monitor the individual for conditions that may require basic lifesaving measures such as maintaining the airway, resuscitation or treatment of shock.
- Evacuation to a medical facility should be affected as quickly as possible.