

Protect Yourself from Heat Stress

Editor's note: Our Tailgate Training Tip Sheets are available in Spanish at gemplers.com.

Key Points:

- Heat stress can be life-threatening.
- It requires immediate medical attention.
- Symptoms of heat stress include exhaustion, dizziness, loss of coordination, severe thirst and confusion.
- Drink more water than you think you need if you are working in hot conditions.

Note to trainer: Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute tailgate training session for your ag/hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees' personal use. However, it may not be published or sold.

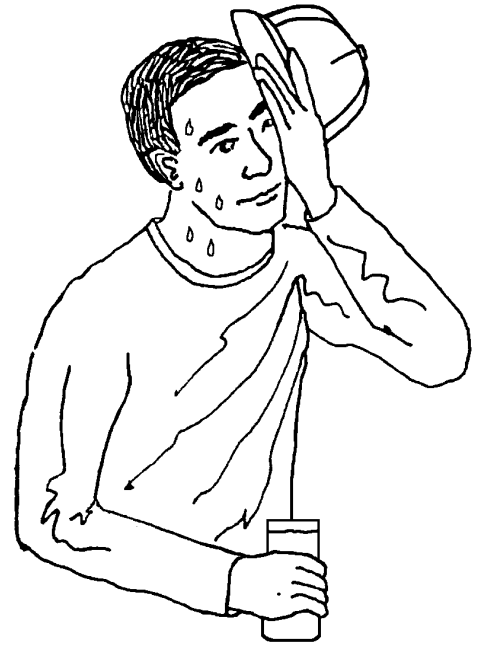
What is heat stress?

- Many of us have worked in hot conditions. The heat can make us tired, irritable and thirsty.
- If our bodies build up more heat than they can cope with, we may get very sick. Sometimes the heat causes us to develop a rash.
- Building up more heat than we can handle is called heat stress.

How to Avoid Heat Stress

Heat stress is very serious. It can be life-threatening. Here are some ways to avoid getting heat stress:

1. Give yourself time to adjust to working in the heat. Let your supervisor know if you're not used to hot conditions.
2. Drink a lot of water before work, during breaks and after work. Don't just rely on your thirst to tell you how much you need.
3. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing that "breathes." Wear a hat with a wide brim in the sun.
4. If your job requires personal protective equipment, ask your supervisor for the lightest weight clothing and respirator that will adequately protect you. Your supervisor may also recommend a cooling vest.
5. Juggle your workload. If possible, do your heaviest tasks during the coolest parts of the day.
6. Seek shade or another cool area during your rest breaks.
7. Use sunscreen.
8. Get an adequate amount of sleep.
9. Don't drink alcohol before work or during the day. And avoid drinking too much coffee, soda, or other drinks with caffeine.
10. Know that some medications may increase your sensitivity to the heat and inform your supervisor if you are concerned.



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How to recognize heat stress

Heat stress can affect your ability to make good decisions. Because of that, it increases your risk of an accident or injury on the job. Here are some common symptoms of heat stress:

- exhaustion
- muscle weakness
- headache, nausea and chills
- dizziness and fainting
- loss of coordination
- severe thirst and dry mouth
- confusion, including slurred speech
- aggressive or irrational behavior

Warning: The symptoms of heat exhaustion and some pesticide poisonings are very similar. Seek immediate medical attention if you are uncertain of the problem.



Here's how you can help

Follow these steps to help a co-worker showing signs of heat stress:

1. Have someone call for immediate medical help.
2. Get your co-worker into the shade or into another cool area.
3. Cool off the person as quickly as possible. Sponge or splash water on the person's face, neck, hands and forearms.
4. Remove any personal protective equipment or other clothing that may be making your co-worker hot. But be careful – it may be contaminated. Put on gloves before touching the PPE.
5. Have the person drink as much water as possible.
6. Try to keep the person still until medical help arrives.



Are there any questions?

Note to trainer: Take time to answer trainees' questions. Then review the Heat Stress Do's and Don'ts.

HEAT STRESS DO'S AND DON'TS	
<p>DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take regular breaks in the shade. • Stop what you are doing and ask for help if the heat is making you dizzy or sick. • Drink more water than you think you need. Drink it frequently and in small amounts. 	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink alcohol if you are working in the heat. • Remove your personal protective equipment in hazardous situations if you get hot. • Be afraid to take immediate action if you think a co-worker is suffering from heat stress.

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