Working in Extreme Weather: Hot Conditions

In Wisconsin, it is likely that you will be exposed to extreme temperatures at both ends of the spectrum, especially if you work outside. Excess heat and extreme cold are both conditions that can place significant stress on the human body. This can affect your health and can also affect productivity. Review and discuss your employer’s policies regarding weather conditions.

Hot Weather

When body temperatures rise even a few degrees above normal (98.6°F) one can experience muscle cramps, become weak, disoriented and dangerously ill unless the body temperature cools down.

If body temperature rises above 105°F, it could be fatal. The following guidelines will help keep a person cool in the heat and avoid the dangerous consequences of heat stress.

- Local radio and television stations typically announce the heat index when it approaches 90°F. The heat index is arrived at by combining the humidity and actual temperature. Working in a heat index of over 130° could be dangerous to life.
- Precautions need to be taken when the heat index is high. Be sure to discuss your company’s policies, especially concerning the extreme heat.
- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) suggests that workers exposed to extreme heat should adapt to their environment gradually.
- Drinking water is the only way to replace the water you lose as you sweat. Make sure that a good supply of drinkable water is available on the jobsite. You should drink at least eight ounces of water every 20-30 minutes while working in hot conditions.
- Working eight hours in a hot environment is stressful. Symptoms of heat stroke include heavy sweating, dizziness, head ache, nauseous, and paleness. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include high body temperature. Symptoms of heat stroke include high body temperature, absence of sweating, with hot, red or dry skin.
- If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stoke which is a medical emergency.
- If you or someone on the site suffers from heat exhaustion, cramps, or other signs of heat stress get medical attention immediately.

Dressing Survival Tips

To survive the heat:
- Apply sunscreen to protect your skin from the sun’s rays,
- Wear loose fitting clothes, not baggy, and
- Wear light colored clothing, if possible.
### Points to Remember!

Drink plenty of water.

Recognize symptoms of heat stroke.

Dress appropriate for the weather.

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### Recognize Heat Stroke

Warning signs of heat stroke vary but may include:

- an extremely high body temperature (above 103 F)
- red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating)
- rapid, strong pulse
- throbbing headache
- dizziness and nausea
- confusion or unconsciousness

In hot working conditions, any of the above symptoms may signal a life-threatening emergency. If you have these symptoms or spot them in a coworker, call for immediate medical assistance while you begin cooling the victim:

- Get the victim to a cool or shady area.
- Cool the victim rapidly using whatever methods you can. For example, immerse the victim in a tub of cool water; place in a cool shower; spray with cool water from a garden hose; sponge with cool water; or if the humidity is low, wrap the victim in a cool, wet sheet and fan him or her vigorously.
- Monitor body temperature, and continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to 101-102 F.
- If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call the hospital emergency room for further instructions.
- Do not give the victim alcohol to drink.
- Get medical assistance as soon as possible.

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