

PREVENTING HEAT STRESS

Keeping Cool In The Heat

Excess heat can place an abnormal stress on your body. When your body temperature rises even a few degrees above normal (which is about 98.6°F), you can experience muscle cramps, become weak, disoriented, and dangerously ill unless you can help your body to cool down. If your body temperature rises above 105°F, your condition can be fatal. Persons who work in hot environments—foundries, kitchens, laundries, and the like—must take special care against heat stress. The following guidelines can help you keep your cool in the heat and avoid the dangerous consequences of heat stress.

Adapt To The Heat

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) suggests that all workers exposed to extreme heat gradually get used to their environment over a one-week period. This means that on your first day in a hot environment, you may only be able to do half the work that a fully-adapted worker would do. Each day, your workload increases slightly until you are able to operate at “full steam.”

Drink Water Frequently

Sweating is one of the ways your body cools itself down. Sweating results in water loss, and the only way to replace the loss (and help your body continue to cool itself) is to drink water frequently. Ideally, you should drink at least 8 ounces of water every 20-30 minutes while

working in hot environments.

Wear Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for hot environments can range from ordinary work clothes made from “breathable” fabrics to specially designed suits that are cooled by air, ice, and even portable air-conditioners. Check with your supervisor about the appropriate PPE for your specific task.

Use Engineering Controls

Your employer may also provide engineering controls such as fans, ventilators, exhaust systems, and

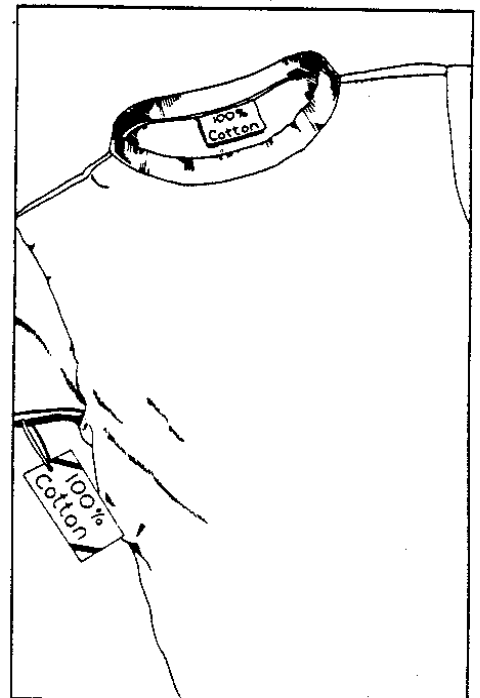
air-coolant or conditioning systems. These controls can help reduce worksite temperatures to more adaptable levels. Other controls such as using heat shields and insulating heat-producing machinery can also help lower the environmental temperature.

Keep Cool

Persons who work in hot environments should become familiar with first aid techniques for heat stress. If you or someone you know suffers from heat exhaustion, cramps, or other signs of heat stress, get medical attention immediately. Keep your cool—heat stress is dangerous, but it's also preventable.



Drink at least 8 ounces of water every 20-30 minutes while working in hot environments.



PPE can range from work clothes made from “breathable” fabrics to specially designed “coolant” suits.