

 **Heat Stress**



An introduction  
to Safetree<sup>TM</sup>

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# Heat Stress

**Crew members can suffer from heat stress when they are exposed to too much heat – usually too much hot sun. Heat stress – or heat stroke – can interfere with a worker's ability to work safely, potentially resulting in injuries. It can also lead to serious health problems or even death if the worker doesn't get medical attention.**

## **Recognising heat stress**

If you're developing or suffering from heat stress it can be hard to realise what's happening because heat stress is disorientating, making it hard to recognise the symptoms. That's why workers need to look out for the signs of heat stress in each other when working in hot environments.

## **Common indicators of heat stress**

As it gets hotter people might notice:

- ▶ more grumpiness, headaches, dizziness, wonky vision
- ▶ loss of concentration and the ability to do some tasks, especially mental tasks
- ▶ loss of ability to do skilled tasks or heavy work
- ▶ weakness, muscle cramps, feeling short of breath
- ▶ heavy sweating
- ▶ intense thirst
- ▶ nausea, vomiting
- ▶ diarrhoea
- ▶ heart palpitations
- ▶ tingling and numbness in the hands and feet.

## **Heat stress is a workplace hazard**

Employers have a duty to ensure the workplace is safe for workers. This includes taking effective measures to protect workers from heat stress, whether workers are inside or outside.

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## What managers can do to control heat stress:

- ▶ Allow for more frequent rest breaks – ideally in a cool or well-ventilated area
- ▶ Ideally, allow workers in hot environments to set their own work and rest schedules
- ▶ Plan to do less physically demanding jobs when it's hottest
- ▶ Move some tasks indoors or into the shade, if possible
- ▶ If that's not possible, create shade for workers – shades or umbrellas can help
- ▶ Use fans or air conditioning (when inside buildings or vehicles)
- ▶ Have an Emergency Action Plan that includes medical care for workers with heat stress.

## What workers can do:

- ▶ **Stay hydrated:** Drink plenty of water (or drinks without alcohol or caffeine); about one litre every hour if it's very hot and heat stress is a risk
- ▶ **Clothing:** When in the sun, cover up as much as possible with loose-fitting clothes made of a light fabric that "breathes", letting air in and your sweat out
- ▶ **Helmet:** Make sure your helmet has a flap and a visor
- ▶ **Become acclimatised:** Don't take on physically demanding tasks too soon if you're not accustomed to the heat
- ▶ **Don't be afraid to sweat:** Sweating is the way our bodies cool down
- ▶ **Get out of the sun:** Work or rest in the shade whenever you can
- ▶ **Sunscreen:** Wear sunscreen, reapply every two hours.

## Look after each other

While experienced workers may be able to tell they're in danger of heat stress and take steps to reduce their risk, inexperienced workers might not recognise the symptoms and keep working. That puts everyone in the crew – and maybe even on the road driving home – in danger. So, when it's hot, keep a close eye on crewmates and let them know if you spot any of the signs.

**For more information on recognising and managing Heat Stress see: Heat Stress: A Guide for Working in the Heat at [www.safetree.nz](http://www.safetree.nz)**