

Risk A/T[®] Work

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Benjamin Franklin 1736



We are pleased to introduce the next edition of **Risk A/T[®] Work**, a forum dedicated to sharing safety and loss control tips with our brokers and insureds. **Risk A/T[®]** is our proprietary risk management approach which promotes informed risk analysis based on two behavioral factors — **Aptitude** and **Tolerance**.

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If you would like to subscribe to **Risk A/T[®] Work**, please contact Victor Sordillo at vsordillo@sompo-intl.com

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Workplace Heat Stress: More than the Basics

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With summer approaching, we all need to be prepared to beat the heat! For many, heat can be much more than just uncomfortable. By understanding the effects of heat, you can reduce the frequency and severity of heat-related illnesses in your workplace.

Heat does not discriminate, and certain populations including those that work outdoors, in hot internal environments, the elderly, or those with heart-related health conditions can be more susceptible to heat-related illness.

What is Heat Stress?

Heat stress can be defined as the body's inability to cool itself and maintain a healthy temperature in a hot environment. Illness that can result from heat stress include:

Heat Rash: Skin irritation caused by sweat ducts trapping perspiration under the skin.

Heat Cramps: Painful cramps from the lack of salt and fluid replacement during intense activities.

Heat Syncope: Fainting due to physical exertion in the heat leading to reduced blood flow to the brain.

Heat Exhaustion: Decreased perspiration after excessive sweating, with core body temperature rising to 104°F, which can lead to heat stroke if left untreated.

Heat Stroke: The most serious form of heat illness that is considered an acute medical emergency where the core body temperature exceeds 104°F and can cause brain or other organ damage and sometimes fatalities.

Measures to Prevent Heat Stress

Employee vulnerability to heat stress should be evaluated, starting with a risk assessment identifying employees' individual risk factors associated with heat. Once identified, leadership should implement preventive measures including:

Eliminating/Controlling the heat source: Incorporate workplace design measures to control heat sources, such as machines (hoists, lift tables) to reduce the physical demands of the work, insulating or reflective barriers, or exhaust the heat with fans. If there's no way to eliminate or reduce the heat, incorporate more frequent rest/fluid breaks, cooling technologies, and other administrative controls.

Workplace Adaption: Acclimatizing in advance of hot working conditions can greatly minimize the effects of heat. Gradual exposure to the warmer environment over a 7–14 day period can increase tolerance and lessen heat stress effects. New workers may require additional adaption time.

Training/Policies: Provide employee training on the signs and symptoms of heat stress and how to react if/when it occurs in themselves or others. A written heat stress policy that outlines responsibilities should also be implemented and posted.

Clothing: Encourage the wearing of appropriate lightweight and breathable clothing and personal protective equipment.

If exposures cannot be eliminated because heat is simply part of the work environment, then you can employ some practical measures, including:

Compliance with Regulations: Some states have specific heat stress standards, so ensure that all staff, including management, fully understand and comply.

Hydrate: Regardless of how hot it is, encourage employees to hydrate early and throughout the day. Water and electrolytes are the key to balancing our thermoregulatory systems. Remind employees not to wait until they feel thirsty, as it may be too late!

Proper Nutrition: While in hot and humid environments, it's important to eat foods that will help hydrate the body but are lower in calories like tomatoes, cucumbers, pineapples and mangos. Higher calorie foods, and things like protein-rich and caffeinated beverages, are hard to digest, creating metabolic heat.

Rest: Quality, uninterrupted sleep in a cool environment is beneficial for proper recovery from heat stress.

Work Pace: Harder and faster work paces create metabolic heat that needs to be managed. Where possible, allow workers to lessen the pace of work.

A proactive approach to addressing potential heat stress risks is critical to keeping employees healthy and safe. Please reach out to your Sompo International Risk Control Specialist or GRSRiskControlQuestions@sompo-intl.com for more information on Heat Stress and how to reduce its effects within your organization.