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The Long Hot Summer - Heat Illness Prevention Awareness

When temperatures and humidity rise, workers risk heat-related illness, which can be fatal. Even in years with no heat wave, hundreds of heat-related deaths occur in the United States. Californians know this all too well. Heat is a serious hazard in outdoor work such as agriculture and construction. Last year was one of our hottest summers on record, and there were at least six heat-related deaths.

In our continuing effort to protect California employers and workers, the State Fund Employer Education Series presents "Heat Illness Prevention for Outdoor Work." The free statewide seminars include new information from Cal/OSHA about their heat illness prevention emergency regulation enforcement.

Cal/OSHA reports it conducted more than 2000 outdoor worksite inspections statewide last year, and more than half of those resulted in violations. If Cal/OSHA inspects a worksite and finds no shade, water or chairs to rest in on a hot day, consequences could include fines of up to \$25,000. That is why knowledge and action is important.

The body normally cools itself by sweating. During extremely hot weather, and especially hot humid weather, sweating is not enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels and heat illness can develop. Heat-related illnesses include:

- Heat rash - skin irritation from excessive sweating
- Heat cramps - muscle pains or spasms that happen during heavy exertion
- Heat exhaustion - heavy sweating, rapid breathing and a fast, weak pulse
- Heatstroke - The most serious heat related illness in which body temperature may rise above 106° F in minutes; symptoms include dry skin, rapid pulse, dizziness, confusion, irrational behavior, convulsions, and coma,. More than twenty percent of heat stroke cases result in death.

State Fund is here to not only help protect the health of California workers, but also improve workplace safety. Workers with heat stress symptoms are more accident-prone, increasing chances of workplace injury. In addition, heat illness prevention helps increase productivity, as overheated employees work less efficiently. In addition to the Employer Education Series heat illness prevention seminars, State Fund's Safety and Health Services has many [resources](#) available to help.

For additional information on heat illness prevention and sample employer procedures, visit www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/HeatIllnessInfo.html.

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