Summer workplace injury: 9 tips to prevent heat accidents.



From heat exhaustion to heatstroke, high temperatures can take a dangerous toll on those working outdoors or in hot indoor environments. The good news? With the right precautions, businesses can help keep their teams safe, productive, and cool all summer long. Follow these nine summer workplace injury tips to keep your team healthier.

1. **Encourage hydration.** Provide refillable water bottles to team members or have them bring them from home. Workers should be hydrating throughout the day, especially in extreme heat, even when they're not thirsty. Offer water stations with cold water for easy refilling. In addition, consider providing electrolyte packs or low-sugar sports drinks to increase hydration.

2. **Avoid dehydrating drinks.** Workers should try to limit dehydrating beverages on shift during extreme heat. This includes coffee, tea, and sugary drinks, like sodas.

3. **Implement breaks.** Offering scheduled breaks can help prevent heat exhaustion. On top of pre-planned break time, empower employees to ask for additional breaks when needed.

4. **Provide shaded break areas.** The temperature in shaded areas can be drastically lower than in direct sunlight. Ensure your team's break area is in complete shade or an air-conditioned space.

5. **Promote heat-friendly clothing.** Choose lightly colored clothing over dark colors. Wear light, loose-fitting layers with breathable fabric.

6. **Offer sun protection.** Hats and sunscreen can protect workers' heads and faces from the sun. Keep sunscreen handy for the team and consider giving out branded hats for further protection.

7. **Acclimate to the weather.** The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) shares, “Nearly 3 out of 4 fatalities from heat illness happen during the first week of work.” To help team members ease in, OSHA recommends that new and returning workers build a tolerance to the heat (acclimatize) and take frequent breaks. They can do so by following the 20% rule: On the first day, work no more than 20% of the shift’s duration at full intensity in the heat. Increase the duration of time at full intensity by no more than 20% a day until workers are used to working in the heat.

8. **Schedule intense work during cooler hours.** The sun is the least intense in the morning, late afternoon, and evening. Try to shift laborious work to these hours to keep your team out of the peak sunshine and heat.

9. **Learn the signs of heat illness.** Your team members should know the signs to look out for in themselves and others. The National Weather Service shares that the signs of heat exhaustion can include dizziness, thirst, heavy sweating, nausea, and weakness. Heat stroke can involve confusion, dizziness, and unconsciousness. Encourage a buddy system where team members look out for each other to spot signs early.

Preventing summer workplace injury starts with awareness and action. A safe workplace is a necessity when temperatures rise. Find tips to keep your team safe in cold conditions, too, and to get support all year long by talking to a local, independent agent.

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