

Top summer safety tips for contractors.



For many contractors, work heats up in the summer — both figuratively and literally. Since soaring temperatures can pose health risks to workers and fire risks on the job site, it's important to follow these summer safety tips for contractors to help everyone keep their cool.

Tips to prevent heat illness.

The top safety risk on a summer job site is heat illness. To prevent it, make sure your team is equipped with:

Hydration. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recommends that workers drink at least one cup of cool water every 20 minutes during hot weather. It's also a good idea to have other drinks available (like sports drinks) that can replace electrolytes.

Sunscreen. Use a high SPF sunscreen to avoid burns, which can both damage the skin and inhibit the body's ability to cool itself.

Protective clothing. If possible, workers should wear hats with brims and light-colored, loose-fitting clothing that can wick moisture.

Regular breaks. Allow workers to take plenty of breaks in a shaded or air-conditioned area. If the job requires heavy gear, have workers remove gear during breaks to cool off.

Smart schedules. Whenever possible, avoid scheduling the most strenuous labor during the peak hours of heat (approximately 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

Time to acclimate. Anyone just beginning work on a hot-weather job site needs time for their body to adjust to the conditions. OSHA recommends the 20% rule: On the first day, workers should spend no more

than 20% of their shift at full intensity in the heat; time spent at full intensity should be increased by no more than 20% each following day.

Education. In addition to learning all the above recommendations, workers should know the stages, symptoms, and treatment of heat illness, in order of severity:

- **Heat cramps**

Symptoms: Muscle spasms or pain, usually in the legs, arms, or torso

Treatment: Stop all activity and rest in a cool (preferably air-conditioned) area. Drink water or a sports drink with electrolytes.

- **Heat syncope**

Symptoms: Lightheadedness, dizziness, or fainting

Treatment: Lie down in a cool area with feet slightly elevated. Slowly sip water or a sports drink with electrolytes.

- **Heat exhaustion**

Symptoms: Nausea or vomiting, dizziness or lightheadedness, heavy sweating, elevated body temperature, or fast heart rate

Treatment: Move to a cool area and loosen or remove excess clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths and sip water. Seek medical help if symptoms worsen or if vomiting prevents drinking.

DO NOT leave a person with heat exhaustion unattended; their symptoms could progress quickly to heat stroke if treatment is not effective.

- **Heat stroke**

Symptoms: Confusion, slurred speech, loss of consciousness, seizures, heavy sweating or hot, dry skin, very high body temperature, rapid heart rate

Treatment: First, call 911; heat stroke can be fatal. While waiting for paramedics, move the person to a cool area, and rapidly cool their body with ice and/or cold water.

Tips to reduce job site fire risks and avoid material damage.

Many materials used on a job site are flammable, including chemicals, paint, cardboard, wood, and insulation. Extreme temperatures can increase the risk of combustion, so extra care must be taken on summer jobs. Follow these tips to reduce fire risk:

Keep your job site clean. Clear away trash, scraps, and any dry vegetation from your work site daily.

Take extra precautions for hot work. Hot work, such as grinding, cutting, or welding, can start fires

even in cooler temperatures. Before performing hot work, clear the surrounding area of all flammable materials, and designate a team member as a fire watch. The fire watch should monitor the area throughout the process and for at least 30 minutes after completion.

Use and store flammable liquids and materials safely.

- Store chemicals and paints in well-ventilated, shaded areas.
- Fuel gas-powered portable equipment far away from structures and flammable materials.
- Store oily rags in OSHA-compliant metal bins in a shaded area.

Always have fire extinguishers available. Make sure all team members know how to use them, using the acronym PASS:

- **P**ull the pin
- **A**im the nozzle at the base of the fire
- **S**queeze the trigger
- **S**weep the nozzle from side to side at the base of the fire

For complete OSHA standards for fire protection and prevention in construction, see [29 CFR Part 1926, Subpart F](#).

Lock up the job site when work is done for the day. In addition to preventing theft of materials, keeping valuable work materials and tools locked away can also help prevent damage from extreme heat, thunderstorms, and high winds.

And of course, in case a fire or accident occurs despite your best efforts at prevention, make sure you have adequate business insurance. Frankenmuth Insurance offers [policies designed specifically for a contractor's needs](#).

Summer is prime time for contractors. Follow these summer safety tips to protect your team and job site, and you'll be able to make the most of it.

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