

e



Working Outdoors in Warm Climates – Part I

Hot summer months pose special hazards for outdoor workers who must protect themselves against heat, sun exposure, and other hazards. Everyone should know the potential hazards and how to manage them.

Sun

Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which causes premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, cataracts, and skin cancer. There are no safe UV rays or safe suntans. Be especially careful in the sun if you burn easily, spend a lot of time outdoors, or have any of the following physical features: numerous, irregular, or large moles; freckles; fair skin; or blond, red, or light brown hair. Here's how to block those harmful rays:



- Cover up. Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Be sure to follow application directions on the bottle or tube.
- Wear a hat. A wide brim hat, not a baseball cap, works best because it protects the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp.
- Wear UV-absorbent sunglasses (eye protection).
Sunglasses don't have to be expensive, but they should block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation. Before you buy sunglasses, read the product tag or label.
- Limit exposure. UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Heat

The combination of heat and humidity can be a serious health threat during the summer months. If you work outside (for example, at a beach resort, on a farm, at a construction site) or in a kitchen, laundry, or bakery, you may be at increased risk for heat related illness.

So, take precautions. Here is how:

- Drink small amounts of water frequently.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing—cotton is good.
- Take frequent short breaks in cool shade.
- Eat smaller meals before work activity.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol or large amounts of sugar.
- Work in the shade.
- Find out from your health care provider if your medications and heat don't mix.
- Know that equipment such as respirators or work suits can increase heat stress.

There are three kinds of major heat-related disorders—heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. You need to know how to recognize each one and what first aid treatment is necessary.

