Work/Rest Schedule

Rather than being exposed to heat for extended periods of time during the course of a job, workers should, wherever possible, be permitted to distribute the workload evenly over the day and incorporate work/rest cycles. Work/rest cycles give the body an opportunity to get rid of excess heat, slow down the production of internal body heat, slow down the heart rate, and provide greater blood flow to the skin.

For the best protection from heat-related illness, workers should spend the rest periods of the cycle in a cool place, for example in a lightly air-conditioned room, trailer, or vehicle, or if one is not available, then in full shade.

Rest periods do not necessarily mean that the workers are on break; these can be productive times. During the rest periods, workers may continue to perform mild or light work, such as completing paperwork, sorting small parts, attending a meeting, or receiving training (e.g., instructions for upcoming work, or a tailgate safety talk).

Have a knowledgeable person at the worksite that is well-informed about heat-related illness and able to modify work activities and the work/rest schedule as needed. When evaluating an appropriate work/rest schedule:
Shorten work periods and increase rest periods:

- As temperature rises
- As humidity increases
- When sun gets stronger
- When there is no air movement
- When protective clothing or gear is worn
- For heavier work
- Assign new and un-acclimatized workers lighter work and longer rest periods. Monitor these workers more closely.

When possible, more frequent shorter periods of exposure to heat are better than fewer longer exposures. This means that the work/rest schedules are often based on 1-hour cycles and might call for a rest period of 15 minutes every hour during hot weather, but 45 minutes per hour when temperature and humidity are extreme. Individual requirements may vary greatly.

Choosing Shaded Rest Areas:
When an air-conditioned space is not available, choose or create rest areas with as many of the following beneficial characteristics as possible:

- In full (complete) shade.

- Where surfaces are not warm from earlier sun (e.g., north-facing wall).
- Opened to cooling breezes, but protect workers if breezes feel uncomfortably hot, which can increase risk of heat illness.
- Free of other hazards (e.g., moving traffic, excessive noise, falling objects).
- With sufficient space for the number of workers needing rest breaks at one time.
- Near a supply of cool drinking water.
- Equipped for workers to do productive light work while their bodies cool.

SAFETY REMINDER

Setting appropriate work rest schedules is critical for protecting workers during outdoor work. Determine what that schedule looks like at what temperatures/heat index BEFORE the hot weather workload settles in.