



SPS HAZARD ALERT

Working in Harsh Climates

DECEMBER 2020



Hazard: Working in Harsh Climates.

Working outdoors in bad weather, cold weather or within a hot environment (particularly in summer).

Following is a link to Safe Work Australia that provides some further information regarding this topic:

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/topic/working-heat>

There is also a lot of good info on this topic at the following web sites:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/> (for weather warnings) and <https://www.cancer.org.au/preventing-cancer/sun-protection/>



Risk:

1. Working in Bad Weather

If you work outside, you're at risk of exposure to bad weather conditions including storms, wind, rain, and lightning.

2. Working in cold

If you work outside, you may be at risk of exposure to extreme cold. Prolonged exposure to cold can result in colds & flues as well as hypothermia, a serious condition that requires immediate medical attention

3. Working in Sun

If you work outside, you're at risk of exposure to ultra violet radiation from the sun, even when it's cloudy. Sun exposure can cause permanent and irreversible damage to the skin.

4. Working in Heat

If you work outside, you're at risk of exposure to heat.

Working in heat can cause heat-related illness including fainting, heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Working in heat can also cause dehydration, burns, and can even reduce concentration and change the way your medications work.

Other Heat Related Safety Problems.

Apart from heat illness, hot working conditions may either contribute to or cause other health and safety problems, for example:

- Loss of grip while handling tools, objects and controls due to sweaty hands;
- Slips, trips and falls due to fainting or fatigue;
- Errors/mistakes due to heat fatigue;
- Not using PPE due to discomfort;
- Not following safe work procedures or cutting corners due to fatigue and or discomfort;



Almost every bodily process requires water to carry the function out. The human body can survive for a far longer period without food than it can without water.

The body cannot produce water by itself so any fluid lost must be replaced. The amount required depends on body size, metabolism, climatic conditions, the food we eat and activity levels.

Fluid deficiencies will eventually lead to Dehydration, Heat Stress and Fatigue (DHF).

Drinking enough water each day is crucial for many reasons: to regulate body temperature, keep joints lubricated, prevent infections, deliver nutrients to cells, and keep organs functioning properly. Being well-hydrated also improves sleep quality, cognition, and mood.

Control Measure:

1. Your workplace must have measures in place to manage the risks to your health and safety caused by bad weather, including:

- working indoors (where possible)
- postponing outside work
- providing access to shelter
- securing structures and objects and turning power off, and
- providing protective equipment, like eye protection.

Eliminating exposure to bad weather is the best protection.

2. Your workplace must have measures in place manage the risks to your health and safety caused by exposure to cold weather, including:

- Adequate warming up procedures **i.e. stretching before commencing work;**
- adequate heating if possible;



- Wear warm and waterproof clothing;
- Enabling workers who are not used to working in cold conditions to acclimatise.
- Wash Wipe Cover – wash your hands, wipe down frequently touched surfaces and cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing.

Eliminating exposure to cold is the best protection.

3. Your workplace must have measures in place to prevent sun-related disease and injury, including:

- working indoors (where possible);
- working outside only during mornings and afternoons;
- providing shade and shelter;
- using sun protective clothing, hat, sunglasses and sunscreen etc.
- Wear correct clothing.



Eliminating exposure to ultra violet radiation is the best protection.

4. Your workplace must have measures in place to manage the risks to your health and safety caused by working in heat, including:

- working indoors (where possible);
- postponing work or scheduling it for cooler parts of the day;
- using automated or remote-controlled equipment instead of manual labour;
- providing access to shelter;
- encouraging workers to drink water regularly;
- cooling the work area with fans or misters;
- scheduling frequent rests;
- providing personal protective equipment like hats, glasses, long sleeve clothing etc.



Eliminating exposure to heat is the best protection.

If you need to assist someone that may have heat stress, then you need to try to lay the person down in shade, remove the outer clothing, provide cool water and fan vigorously. If symptoms are severe or do not improve, seek medical attention immediately.

Other things that may contribute to an incident may be:

- Individual factors that may cause dehydration (such as poor diet, vomiting, diarrhoea or alcohol and caffeine consumption);
- Individual medical conditions that may affect heat stress (such as heart problems, diabetes or hypertension, some medications); and
- An individual's age, general physical fitness and weight.

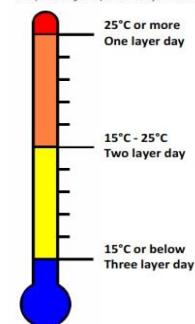
Stop working if you feel unwell – look for the signs:

- Painful muscle spasms or cramps;
- Heavy sweating;
- Difficulty in thinking clearly;
- Slurred speech;
- Blurred vision;
- Dizziness or fainting;
- Headaches;
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting.
- Shivering

Dress for the Weather

You can use this guide to help you choose what clothes to wear to school. If we all dress for the weather, we can help save the planet!

Draw pictures or glue on photos of what your school uniform what would look like for each layer day.



Other things to think about: Is there a cold or hot wind? Is the weather going to change today?

Another great tool you can use to check the weather and control measures is the "Sunsmart app". Download it on your mobile device, it's free and it provides you plenty of info.



If you have any questions about this or you are worried, please contact your Area Manager immediately to discuss further. Remember, poor preparation in excessive climatic conditions can kill or cause serious injury/illness, so take it seriously.

