

Safety Alert of THE MONTH

PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS IN BC'S FOREST INDUSTRY

August 2019

Heat-Related Illness

High temperatures and sunshine can be a wonderful thing when enjoying time at the lake or on the beach, but can cause serious health issues for people working outdoors. The wide variety of job roles and often rigorous physical activity in forestry can put workers at risk for heat-related illness if not managed properly.

Types of heat-related illnesses

The most serious types of heat-related illnesses experienced by workers are heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

- Heat exhaustion, which generally develops when a person is working or exercising in hot weather and does not drink enough liquids.
- Heat stroke, which occurs when the body fails to regulate its own temperature and body temperature continues to rise, often to 40.6°C (105°F) or higher. **Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Even with immediate treatment, it can be life-threatening or cause serious long-term problems.**



Recognition

Symptoms of heat exhaustion may start suddenly, and include:

- Skin is pale, cool and moist
- Nausea or irritability
- Dizziness
- Muscle cramps or weakness
- Feeling faint
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Thirst
- Heavy sweating
- High body temperature

Heat exhaustion may quickly develop into heat stroke. Symptoms of heat stroke include:

- Skin that may be red, hot and dry
- Heavy sweating or sweating may have stopped
- Confusion
- Loss of consciousness
- Seizures
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fast heart rate
- Difficulty breathing
- Very high body temperature



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What to do



Prevention is the best option for dealing with heat-related illnesses in the workplace. Prevention includes taking adequate rest periods in a cool location, acclimatizing to the heat, adjusting the type and timing of work, and drinking plenty of water.

The WorkSafeBC website has a number of resources for preventing heat-related illnesses, located at www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/hazards-exposures/heat-stress

If prevention did not work and a worker is dealing with heat stress, consider the following:

First aid for *heat exhaustion* includes:

- Call first aid. Stay with the person until help arrives.
- Move to a cooler, shaded location.
- Remove as many clothes as possible (including socks and shoes).
- Apply cool, wet cloths or ice to head, face or neck. Spraying with cool water and fanning will also help.
- Encourage the person to drink water, clear juice, or a sports drink.
- Do not cool too much. If the person starts to shiver, stop cooling.

First aid for *heat stroke* includes:

- **Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Get medical treatment immediately.**
- Stay with the person until help arrives.
- Move to a cooler, shaded location.
- Remove as many clothes as possible (including socks and shoes).
- Wet the person's skin and clothing with cool water. Continue to cool during transportation.
- Apply cold, wet cloths or ice to head, face, neck, armpits, and groin.
- Do not try to force the person to drink liquids.

Additional Information:

- HealthLinkBC – Heat Exhaustion: www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/tv7970#tv7970-sec
- HealthLinkBC – Heat Stroke: www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/sth149604#sth149604-sec
- Two BC Forest Safety Council alerts for heat-related illnesses:
 - www2.bcforestsafe.org/node/1342
 - www2.bcforestsafe.org/node/218

