



## Safety & Risk Office 5-Minute Safety Talk No. 4 – Sun Safety

*Note to Supervisor: This 5-Minute Safety Talk (in some places, it might be called a Toolbox Talk or a Tailgate Talk) is designed not only to communicate important safety information to your employees, but also to be given to them by you, which will hopefully reinforce the message and let them know your expectations for safety. You can use the text below as a script to be rendered verbatim or just as talking points to be stated in your own words. Please also complete the attendance listing on the last page and send it to Safety & Risk, Mail Stop 66.*

You don't have to work in a desert to suffer from too much heat on the job. Even in a moderate climate such as Florida's, many outdoor activities are hot and uncomfortable, especially when you are doing physically demanding work. But discomfort is not the only problem. If you don't take the proper precautions, heat can give you a rash, make you pass out or even kill you.

What signs and symptoms might you notice if your body is too hot?

- First, you may notice that you are **tired** and **less mentally alert**. This increases the chances that an accident might occur.
- You may **sweat**. The body produces sweat so the evaporation will cool you off. Sweating isn't as effective if the air is very humid, because not as much sweat evaporates.
- **Heat rash** is possible. You get it when your sweat glands swell and get plugged up.
- You can get **sunburn** if you're in direct sunlight too long without using a sunscreen product on your skin. Sunburn can be painful and may even lead to skin cancer.

If you don't pay attention to these early symptoms and get out of the heat, you can get *heat stress*. What does heat stress do to your body?

- The first symptom is usually **heat cramps**. If you don't replace the fluids and salts (called **electrolytes**) that you lose by sweating, you may get muscle pain or muscle spasms. These are most common in the arms, legs, back and stomach.
- **Heat exhaustion** can follow. Your whole body (especially your circulatory system) is extremely stressed. Some possible symptoms are:
  - Fatigue
  - Shortness of breath
  - Pale, flushed face and neck
  - Headache, dizziness, or fainting
  - Clammy skin
  - Nausea and vomiting
  - Heavy sweating
  - Rapid heartbeat and breathing
- **Heat stroke** is the most serious stage of heat stress. Your body temperature shoots up. **50%** of people with heat stroke **die**. Symptoms are:

- Dizziness and confusion
  - Red, hot, dry skin
  - Nausea and vomiting
  - Very little sweating
  - Rapid pulse
  - High body temperature (around 105° F)
  - Convulsions
  - Fainting
- Anyone with heat stroke must be taken to a **doctor or hospital** immediately.

What's the best treatment for the different stages of heat stress?

- **Heat cramps** — Stop work, drink fluids and rest in a cool area. Drinking electrolyte solutions may also help.
- **Heat exhaustion** — Give first aid by moving the person to a cool place to rest. Remove as much clothing as possible. Give the person water. Drinking electrolyte solutions may also help. Don't allow the person to get chilled, and treat for shock if necessary. Get medical help.
- **Heat stroke** — Call 911 to get an ambulance immediately. Immerse the person in cool water or ice.

Some people are more likely to get heat stress than others. Why?

- You have a higher risk of heat stress if:
  - You are **not physically fit**.
  - You are **overweight**.
  - You have a **chronic illness** like heart disease or diabetes.
  - You **drink alcohol** or **take drugs** (either illegal drugs or prescription drugs).
  - You are **dehydrated**—from diarrhea, a fever or not drinking enough water.
  - You wear **dark, heavy or tight clothing**.
  - You are **not used to working in heat**. The more you work in heat (**become acclimatized**), the more your body gets used to it.

What precautions should you take to prevent heat stress?

- **Plan the day** to take on more strenuous jobs during the cooler morning hours.
- **Drink water** (or an electrolyte solution), about 8 ounces every 15 minutes. You may need a quart an hour or more, depending on conditions. Drink even if you don't feel thirsty.
- **Take frequent breaks** in an air-conditioned or shaded area.
- Wear appropriate clothing when you're in the sun. The best clothing is a loose, lightweight cotton shirt and pants in a light color. Wear a wide-brimmed hat in the sun. Wear a lightweight **long-sleeve** shirt and **long pants** if it's over 95° F.
- Use a sunscreen product to protect your skin from ultraviolet rays in sunlight. It should have a **sun protection factor (SPF)** of at least 15. (Check the label.)
- Take frequent cool **showers** if possible.
- Stay **physically fit**.
- Get enough **sleep**.

- **Limit** your use of **alcohol**. Ask your doctor about prescription drugs you're taking.
- **Use the buddy system**. Watch your co-worker for signs of heat stress.
- **Know what to do** if you or your coworker show any symptoms.
- **Notify your supervisor** and **stop work** if you notice any major symptoms.

If everyone can follow these precautions, then hot weather will be simply uncomfortable, rather than a threat to your safety.

# 5-Minute Safety Talk No. 4 – Sun Safety Attendance List

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

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**Send to the Safety & Risk Office, Mail Stop # 66, when completed.**