Don’t Let the Heat Get to You



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Meeting Kit

You might be the toughest roughneck around, but a good dose of heat stress can quickly tame anyone’s bravado.

Heat – whether from the sun or from your work environment – can create a life-threatening emergency. That’s why workers in the oil and gas industry should be trained to prevent heat illness and to recognize early symptoms such as:

- excessive fatigue
- light-headedness
- irritability
- lack of coordination
- altered judgment

These symptoms can not only lead to more serious effects, they can result in serious injuries and death on the job. Several personal risk factors determine your susceptibility to heat stress. These include:

- lack of acclimatization (gradually exposing yourself to your work and the heat)
- poor physical fitness

- obesity
- age
- pre-existing medical conditions
- alcohol and drug use

Workers should not work alone in conditions where heat stress is possible, and it’s important that workers monitor each other for symptoms.

Heat stress can lead to skin rashes, cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Heat exhaustion is caused by the depletion of both water and salt through sweating. Early symptoms are dizziness, headache, weakness, fatigue and nausea. If a worker is suffering from heat exhaustion:

- Move the person to a cooler place.
- Lay him down and elevate the legs.
- Loosen restrictive clothing.
- If the victim is conscious, give him cool, salted water to drink.
- Fan the victim or sponge him down with cool water (but not too cold).

Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency that occurs when the body has lost its ability to sweat. The victim’s inner temperature rises dangerously, and he may complain of blurred vision, dizziness, headache and nausea. These symptoms are similar to heat exhaustion but the skin will be hot and dry, and the victim’s respiratory rate may increase. He may suffer a seizure or collapse without warning.

Treat a heat stroke victim by:

- Calling for medical help immediately
- Moving him to a cooler place
- Maintaining his airway and breathing
- Laying him down and removing his outer clothing
- Applying cool water via spray or wet blanket

You can prevent heat stress by drinking plenty of water, wearing loose, light-colored clothing, taking frequent rest breaks in cool areas and properly acclimatizing yourself to the work environment.

Working in the oil and gas industry can be tough, but it’s a lot tougher if you don’t take heat stress seriously.