Tool: Heat Index – Summary of Risk Levels and Associated Protective Measures



Heat Index: Summary of Risk Levels and Associated Protective Measures

The most critical actions to take to help prevent heat-related illness at each risk level:

Heat Index	Risk Level	Protective Measures
<91°F	Lower	• Provide drinking water • Ensure that adequate medical services are available • Plan ahead for times when the heat index is higher, including worker heat safety training • Encourage workers to wear sunscreen • Acclimatize workers If workers must wear heavy protective clothing, perform a strenuous activity or work in the direct sun, additional precautions are recommended to protect workers from heat-related illness. *

91°F to 103°F	**Moderate**	**In addition to the steps listed above:** **• Remind workers to drink water often (about 4 cups/hour)[**]** **• Review heat-related illness topics with workers: how to recognize heat-related illness, how to prevent it, and what to do if someone gets sick** **• Schedule frequent breaks in a cool, shaded area** **• Acclimatize workers** **• Set up buddy system/instruct supervisors to watch workers for signs of heat-related illness** **If workers must wear heavy protective clothing, perform a strenuous activity or work in the direct sun, additional precautions are recommended to protect workers from heat-related illness.[*]** **• Schedule activities at a time when the heat index is lower** **• Develop work/rest schedules** **• Monitor workers closely**
103°F to 115°F	**High**	**In addition to the steps listed above:** **• Alert workers of high-risk conditions** **• Actively encourage workers to drink plenty of water (about 4 cups/hour) [**]** **• Limit physical exertion (e.g. use mechanical lifts)** **• Have a knowledgeable person at the worksite who is well-informed about heat-related illness and able to determine appropriate work/rest schedules** **• Establish and enforce work/rest schedules** **• Adjust work activities (e.g., reschedule work, pace/rotate jobs)** **• Use cooling techniques** **• Watch/communicate with workers at all times** **When possible, reschedule activities to a time when the heat index is lower**
>115°F	**Very High to Extreme**	**Reschedule non-essential activity for days with a reduced heat index or to a time when the heat index is lower** **Move essential work tasks to the coolest part of the work shift; consider earlier start times, split shifts, or evening and night shifts.** **Strenuous work tasks and those requiring the use of heavy or non-breathable clothing or impermeable chemical protective clothing should not be conducted when the heat index is at or above 115°F.** **If essential work must be done, in addition to the steps listed above:** **• Alert workers of extreme heat hazards** **• Establish water drinking schedule (about 4 cups/hour) [**]** **• Develop and enforce protective work/rest schedules** **• Conduct physiological monitoring (e.g., pulse, temperature, etc.)** **• Stop work if essential control methods are inadequate or unavailable.**

[*]The heat index is a simple tool and a useful guide for employers making decisions about protecting workers in hot weather. It does not account for

certain conditions that contribute additional risk, such as physical exertion. Consider taking the steps at the next highest risk level to protect workers from the added risks posed by:

- Working in the direct sun (can add up to 15°F to the heat index value)
- Wearing heavy clothing or protective gear

**Under most circumstances, fluid intake should not exceed 6 cups per hour or 12 quarts per day. This makes it particularly important to reduce work rates, reschedule work, or enforce work/rest schedules.

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/protective_measures.html