

Quick Tips For:

THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

Some employers are not just sweating the heat this summer, they're also sweating how that heat is translating into increased employee complaints and injuries and decreased productivity. Employers are duty-bound to protect their employees from exposure to dangerous heat conditions in the workplace – excessive heat is a safety hazard. Employers should consider the following tips to help their workforce beat the heat while reducing their exposure to liability.

TIP 1: Monitor weather reports daily. Use the heat index rather than on the air temperature alone to set/activate heat safety procedures. Two reasons why: (1) the index takes both the air temperature and humidity into account; the higher the index, the hotter it feels and thus, it is better for estimating the heat risk to workers and (2) OSHA uses the heat index to set its guidelines/regulations – generally, you can't go wrong following (and if necessary down the line, citing to) OSHA as the source of a workplace safety procedure.

TIP 2: Provide training about the hazards leading to heat stress and how to prevent them; this information should be part of your company's safety plan.

TIP 3: In a readily accessible place (e.g. break area/next to time cards), post the risk factors for heat illnesses/exposure/exhaustion, as well as, what to do if a worker becomes ill from heat.

TIP 4: Provide cool water to workers close to the work area. OSHA recommends at least one pint of water per hour - that breaks down to about 6 ounces every 15 minutes.

TIP 5: Schedule frequent rest periods with water breaks in shaded or air conditioned areas.

TIP 6: Require heat protective apparel such as a hat when/where appropriate.

TIP 7: Establish a routine/procedure for monitoring workers for symptoms of over exposure.

THE BOTTOM LINE: The best way to limit, if not avoid, liability is to keep your work force from getting a heat-related illness in the first place. Now is a good time to review your employment/safety manual to make sure it addresses heat safety.

For more information on these topics, visit Hill Wallack LLP's
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