

# SAFETY BREAKS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Your Safety Concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

Discussion Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

## Today's Topic: Preventing Heat Injuries

A hot job, a hot day, and high humidity—it all adds up to heat stress. And, too much heat stress leads to heat illness. This is the body's way of saying it can't take the heat. There are three kinds of heat illness: heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and heat cramps. They can occur separately, or in combination.

### HEAT STROKE HAPPENS WHEN SWEATING STOPS

Heat stroke is the most serious heat condition and occurs when the body's heat-regulating system breaks down under stress, and sweating stops. There may be little warning and, unless the victim receives quick treatment, death can occur. A heat stroke victim usually has red or spotted skin, and a body temperature that reaches 105°F/41°C, or higher. The victim may also suffer from confusion, convulsions, or delirium before losing consciousness. If someone on your job suffers a heat stroke, call an ambulance and move the victim to a cool place. Then, thoroughly soak the person's clothing with cool water, or place the person in a tub of cold water (do not add ice). When the victim's temperature has dropped, dry them off. If the body temperature rises again, repeat the cooling process.

### WHEN BODY FLUIDS GET LOW, HEAT EXHAUSTION SETS IN

Heat exhaustion develops when the body loses more fluid (through sweating) than it takes in. A victim of heat exhaustion sweats profusely, but becomes extremely weak or giddy. In a more serious case, the victim may vomit or faint. The skin becomes clammy and the complexion becomes pale, but body temperature stays fairly normal. To treat a victim of heat exhaustion, have the person sip water for about an hour while lying down. Loosen any clothing, and raise the victim's feet 8 to 12 inches. Then apply cool, wet cloths, and fan the victim. If vomiting occurs, discontinue fluids and take the person to a hospital, where an intravenous solution can be administered.

### WHEN THE BODY LOSES SALT, WATCH FOR HEAT CRAMPS

Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms. The arms, legs, and abdomen are usually affected first, but any muscles used when working are susceptible. Heat cramps strike those who sweat profusely. Drink lots of water to replace



body salt lost through sweating. Low salt content in the muscles causes painful cramps during or after work hours. To treat a victim of heat cramps, press firmly with your hands on the cramped muscles or gently massage them to relieve the spasm. If the victim does not have another medical condition, you may give the victim half a glass of salt water (one teaspoon of salt per glass of water) every 15 minutes for about an hour. Victims with other medical conditions should be seen by a doctor.

## BEAT THE HEAT

- On your first day in a hot environment, expect to do only half the work you would ordinarily do. Each day, increase your workload until you are able to operate at full capacity.
- Drink lots of water. Sweating is one way your body cools itself. Since sweating results in water loss, the only way to replace the water is to drink more of it. Drink at least eight ounces of water every 20-30 minutes while working in a hot environment.
- Avoid alcohol and carbonated drinks, which can cause cramps.
- Wear protective equipment. Personal protective equipment (PPE) for hot environments can range from ordinary work clothes made from fabrics that “breathe,” to specially designed suits that are cooled by air, ice, and even portable air-conditioners. Check with your supervisor about the right PPE for your job.

**Identify the symptoms of heat injuries early, and treat appropriately!**

What are some things you can do to keep yourself cool when exposed to extreme heat?

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If you know you will be working in a hot environment tomorrow, what can you do today to prepare/protect yourself?

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