

Heat Related-Illness

Solar UV Radiation

Working in heat is a hazard that can result in severe health problems for many workers – whether they work indoors or outdoors. If the body has to work too hard to keep cool, it starts to overheat and a worker begins to suffer from heat-related illness. Heat related—illnesses include:

- Dehydration
- Heatstroke
- Fainting
- Heat rash
- Heat cramps
- Heat exhaustion

If a heat related—illness occurs the recommended treatment is to move to and rest in the coolest possible place offering increased air movement, use a fan to increase air movement if required,

- Drink frequent small quantities of cool fluid,
- Loosen tight clothing,
- Sponge body down with cool water, and
- Seek medical attention if there is no improvement.

Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is the major cause of skin cancer and Australia has some of the highest levels of UV radiation in the world. Outdoor workers receive up to 10 times more UV radiation exposure than indoor workers, significantly increasing their risk of developing skin cancer, including melanoma (*SA Cancer Council*). Simple steps can be taken to prevent UV exposure and include ;

- Apply sunscreen
- Wear a hat
- Wear clothes that cover the arms and legs
- Work in the shade.

There were 13 work-related fatalities from working in extreme heat in Australia between 2001 – 2013. Twelve of these workers died from exposure resulting from working outdoors. The 13th worker died after working in an enclosed ceiling space during a heatwave.

Unless it is specified in workplace employment agreements, the work health and safety legislation does not set temperatures at which a worker may be sent home, nor does it determine acceptable levels of ultraviolet radiation (UVR) exposure. Each workplace environment is different, and the onus is on the host employer to manage any risks, in consultation with their workers.

If you have any queries or need assistance in ensuring you are meeting your obligations under legislation, don't hesitate to contact our WHS Coordinator on **(08) 8348 1243** or email us at safety@peer.com.au