

Wellness @Work

Summer 2013

Working Outdoors in Summer

After a long winter, warming temperatures and sunny conditions require many employees to work out of doors. This new environment creates some unique hazards for those responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of workers.

Exposure to the mix of heat, humidity, and sun can lead to serious heat-related illnesses. But a number of other problems can also create safety issues outside.

Job Site Hazards

Work sites can contribute to hazardous conditions and demand special considerations to:

- ✓ Take precautions when maneuvering vehicles over rough terrain, uneven surfaces, wet grass or mud.
- ✓ Make sure holes are marked or filled in to avoid trips and falls.
- ✓ Inspect excavations after every rainstorm to identify areas where water collects, creating potential drowning hazards.

- ✓ Remember to keep track of overhead hazards such as power lines when working or moving equipment.

Vegetation Hazards



Each year, poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac cause almost two million cases of dermatitis.

- ✓ Teach employees to identify these plants to avoid contact with them.
- ✓ Clothing and gloves can help protect against direct contact.
- ✓ Take precautions to prevent indirect contamination from touching contaminated clothing or breathing smoke from burning leaves.
- ✓ Use barrier cream every day before beginning work and again after washing your hands.

Weather Hazards

Develop emergency action plans for all likely severe weather scenarios and train workers how to respond.



- ✓ Designate appropriate shelter sites and monitor local weather warning systems.
- ✓ Demonstrate how weather alarms will be given and hold drills so employees can practice appropriate responses.

Heat Hazards

Employees become more vulnerable to heat-related injuries and illnesses with rising summer temperatures. Personal characteristics such as age, weight, fitness, and medical condition can affect an employee's ability to deal with excessive heat. OSHA recommends:

- ✓ Wearing clothing that does not transmit visible light.
- ✓ Wearing a wide-brim or hard hat to protect the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp.
- ✓ Applying a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.

- ✓ Wearing sunglasses that block UV rays.
- ✓ Limiting direct sun exposure and seeking shade whenever possible.

Other heat related conditions include heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.



More Information...

You can rely on MED-1 to provide more information on preventing outdoor hazards in your work environment because we see your employees every day and know how important health and safety is to you.

Contact Mary Alice Ehrlich at maehrlich@med1services.com or Tammie Milligan at tmilligan@med1services.com.

More information on outdoor hazards is available at www.osha.gov.

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Insect Hazards

Summer insects can be more than annoying—bites and stings can lead to serious illnesses.

- ✓ Watch sting victims for prominent swelling and tenderness in the area of the stings.
- ✓ Look for hives to develop or any problem breathing or swallowing.
- ✓ Seek medical attention for stings occurring near the eyes, nose, or throat.

If you must work in areas where insects abound, you can avoid some discomfort by:

- ✓ Not wearing sweet-smelling perfumes, hairsprays, and deodorants.
- ✓ Avoiding brightly colored clothing or flowery pattern clothing.
- ✓ Not eating in areas where there are bees or hornets, because they are naturally attracted to food odors.
- ✓ Not panicking if you find a hive or nest. Stop and back away slowly, unless they begin to sting --then run!



Lyme disease is also a risk for outdoor workers. Most people infected with Lyme disease develop a rash and flu symptoms, but can be treated successfully with antibiotics.



Although the chances of contracting West Nile virus or encephalitis through mosquito bites is very slim, protective actions include:

- ✓ Avoid brushy, overgrown, and woody areas, if possible.
- ✓ Eliminate as many sources of standing water as possible to reduce mosquito breeding areas.
- ✓ Remove leaves, tall grass, and brush from areas around work areas.
- ✓ Apply tick-toxic chemicals to surrounding work areas and use approved insect repellents.
- ✓ Wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts, high boots, and a hat.
- ✓ Shower and wash clothes after outdoor exposure.
- ✓ Carefully check your body for ticks, promptly remove them with tweezers, and cleanse the skin with antiseptic.
- ✓ When possible, schedule work to avoid work at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening.

MED-1 Services

Screenings

- Height & Weight
- Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Body Composition
- Blood Pressure
- Cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Colo-rectal cancer
- PSA

Specialized Programs

- Health risk appraisals
- Immunizations
- Smoking cessation
- Customized worksite programs
- Drug free worksite
- Special exams

Education

- CPR/First Aid training
- AED programs
- Wellness coaching
- Health fairs
- Wellness education



Wellness at Work is a informational publication provided by

MED-1 Occupational Health System to facilitate health and wellness initiatives for employees.

For more information on any topics presented or to access additional copies of current or past issues, contact Tammie Milligan at 616.459.1570 or go to — www.med1services.com.