

Wellness @Work

Summer 2010

Preventing Summer Injuries

As summer approaches, we look forward to relaxation, recreation, and outdoor activities. Unfortunately, the summer months bring many more injuries than any other time of year. Protecting yourself on and off the job requires an awareness of the top hazards and how to avoid them.

The most common cause of summer injury for adults is from **driving accidents**. With more drivers on the road – including younger, less experienced students, motorcyclists, and other recreational vehicles – staying alert to moving traffic and pedestrians is the key to avoiding accidents.

Head injuries from bike or other wheeled apparatus accidents can be reduced by 85% by wearing a helmet.

Water safety tips include never swimming alone and knowing your physical limits. Never dive into a pool or shallow body of water and avoid alcohol when operating boats or other personal watercraft.

Insect bites are part of the outdoor experience, but taking extra precautions keeps mild discomfort from turning into an allergic reaction, infection, or serious illness. Keep skin covered as much as possible and use repellents containing DEET. Preventing breeding sources by eliminating any standing water reduces the infestation of summer insects.

Heat related disorders can include heat stroke, exhaustion, cramps, and rashes. To avoid heat stress, drink lots of water; wear lightweight/light colored/loose-fitting clothes; and, avoid alcohol, caffeinated drinks, and/or heavy meals.

Other common, but preventable summer injury hazards include:



Being struck by lightning. If you see lightning or hear thunder, take shelter.

Fire and fireworks injuries. Never use accelerants around open flames and never pick up an unexploded firecracker.

Food-borne illnesses. Keep cold foods on ice if they will be out for more than two hours.

By being aware, you can protect yourself and your family during the summer months.

MED-1 Occupational Health System wishes you a safe and enjoyable summer.

MED-1 Services

Screenings

- Biometric
- 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

Incentive Programs

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Beating the Summer Heat

From iron workers to construction to pastry bakers, West Michigan works in a wide variety of hot and humid environments. As the warm weather approaches, many more workers will face hot conditions.

Heat related disorders can include:

- ✓ Heat stroke
- ✓ Heat exhaustion
- ✓ Heat cramps
- ✓ Fainting
- ✓ Heat rash

Preventing Heat Stress

Following a few basic precautions to lessen, or even eliminate, heat stress.

Engineering controls, such as general ventilation and spot cooling help defuse excess heat. Shielding protects employees from radiant heat sources. Evaporative cooling and mechanical refrigeration are other ways to reduce heat. Eliminating steam leaks, using power tools, and protective clothing also reduce the hazards of heat exposure for workers.

Work practices include providing plenty of water—as much as a quart per worker per hour. Also, train first aid workers to recognize and treat heat stress quickly.



Alternating **work and rest periods** in a cooler area avoids overheated workers. If possible, heavy work

should be scheduled during mornings and evenings.

Acclimatization to the heat through short exposures followed by longer periods of work in the hot environment can reduce heat stress.

New employees and those returning from an extended absence should have a recommended 5-day period of adjustment starting at 50/50 work and rest.

Employee education is vital to make workers aware of the need to replace fluids and salt lost through sweat. And, recognizing the early signs of dehydration, exhaustion, and other heat stresses can prevent heat stress.

Safety Problems

Heat tends to promote accidents due to the slipperiness of sweaty palms, dizziness, and the fogging of safety glasses. Hot surfaces create steam and, also, the possibility of burns.

Working in a hot environment lowers mental alertness and physical performance. Increased body temperature also contributes to irritability, anger, and other emotional states that divert attention from potentially hazardous tasks.



Heat Stress Response:

- ✓ Move the worker to a cool, shaded area.
- ✓ Loosen or remove heavy clothing.
- ✓ Provide cool drinking water.
- ✓ Fan and mist the person with water.
- ✓ Call 911 if the worker is nonresponsive.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/niosh or www.osha.gov

More Information...

You can also rely on MED-1 to provide more information on “beating the heat” 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.



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.