

HAZARD ALERT

Extreme Heat 30th January 2014

REFERENCE:

WHS Act 2012, cl 19.

WHS Regulations 2012

Code of Practice – Managing the Work Environment and Facilities

OBJECTIVE:

To eliminate risk of any person suffering from heat stress.

BACKGROUND:

Temperatures are forecast to be over 40°C in the coming days (at least 7 days according to Bureau of Meteorology). Hot weather is a hazard that must be managed when planning work activities as workers may suffer heat stress (includes a number of related conditions, including heat exhaustion and heat stroke). In all of these, the body is under stress through overheating and can be a life-threatening condition and in extreme cases, can result in death.

A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that workers carrying out work in extremes of heat are able to carry out work without a risk to their health and safety.

Where workers are expected to work outdoors, the level of risk must be determined. Appropriate controls to be implemented as required.

The code of practice for *Managing the Work Environment and Facilities* provides more information on how to eliminate or minimise extreme exposure to heat.

HEAT STRESS:

Work involving heat can lead to physical discomfort. You must be aware of the early warning signs of heat stress, and take appropriate action if you experience them (or if you observe another person who appears to be in difficulty). See attachment: Beat the Heat, Stay Cool

The warning signs are:

- Heat rashes – hives, sunburn
- Heat cramps – painful muscle spasms, heavy sweating
- Blurred vision
- Dizziness, exhaustion
- Slurred speech
- Difficulty in thinking clearly.

Once one of these signs have been experienced or observed, stop work and take steps to safeguard health. Contact your supervisor/manager immediately.

PREVENTATIVE ACTION:-

Personal and environmental factors must be considered when assessing the risk to workers' from working in a very hot or cold environment.

Personal factors include:

- hydration
- the level of physical activity
- the amount and type of clothing worn
- the duration of the exposure.

Environmental factors include:

- air temperature
- the level of humidity
- the level of air movement and radiant heat
- reflective surfaces (e.g. bitumen, sand, water).

The following measures are recommended to avoid heat-related risks in the workplace:

- Schedule work so that more physically demanding tasks are done during the cooler times of the day.
- Rotate workers who have to work in direct sunlight
- Where possible, provide artificial shade such as umbrellas or a sunshade.
- Keep well hydrated. Workplaces must provide fresh drinking water.
- Ensure adequate ventilation. Whenever possible, the work environment should be ventilated by the use of fans or other means.
- Provide UV protection – sunblock and wide-brimmed hats should be supplied as part of personal protective equipment.
- Where work has to be done outside, depending on the work, the workplace may need to consider implementing a work-rest regime, allowing workers to take extra breaks in a cool area (if possible in an air-conditioned environment to assist in lowering metabolic heat productions and reduce body heat).

**FOR ENQUIRIES OR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE
CONTACT YOUR WHS CONSULTANT**