



Safety Bulletin
June 2026

Heat Illness Prevention

Summer is approaching, and anyone who works or spends time outdoors may face days of extreme heat. OSHA notes that millions of U.S. workers are exposed to heat on the job each year, and although heat illness is preventable, thousands still become sick from occupational heat exposure and some cases are fatal.

California employers must take these four steps to help prevent heat illness:

Training

Train all employees and supervisors on how to prevent heat illness.

Water

Provide enough fresh water for each employee to drink at least one quart per hour, about four 8-ounce glasses—and encourage frequent hydration.

Shade

Provide access to shade and encourage employees to take a cool-down rest there for at least five minutes. Workers should not wait until they feel sick to cool down.

Planning

Develop and follow written procedures that comply with the Cal/OSHA Heat Illness Prevention Standard.

Under Cal/OSHA, employers must provide workplaces free of known safety hazards, including extreme heat. Any employer with employees exposed to high temperatures should have a comprehensive heat illness prevention program in place.

A heat illness prevention program should include the following:

- Provide workers with adequate water, rest, and shade throughout the workday.
- Allow new and returning workers to gradually increase their workload and take more frequent breaks as they build heat tolerance.
- Establish emergency procedures for first aid and medical transport if an employee shows signs of heat illness.
- Hold safety meetings to train workers on heat illness prevention.
- Train workers to recognize symptoms of heat-related illness in themselves and their co-workers.
- Provide supervisors with training on how to prevent and recognize heat-related illnesses.
- Monitor each shift to ensure water, rest, and shade are available and that signs of heat illness are identified early.

OSHA reports that exposure to environmental heat caused 479 worker fatalities in the United States from 2011 through 2022, an average of 40 deaths per year. OSHA also cites an estimated 33,890 work-related heat injuries and illnesses involving days away from work from 2011 through 2020, or about 3,389 cases each year. OSHA notes that these figures are likely underestimates, in part because heat-related illnesses are often underreported.

- Use a buddy system so workers can watch for symptoms and report concerns quickly to a supervisor.
- Set up portable canopies with misting hoses to provide shaded, cooler rest areas.
- Provide cooling caps and bandanas to outdoor workers.
- Monitor the OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety App and follow its recommendations.
- When extreme heat is expected, offer earlier shifts and additional breaks.

- Reinforce heat illness prevention all summer through texts, emails, posted signs, and regular toolbox talks.
- In hot indoor spaces such as shops, hangars, and warehouses, provide fans, ice machines, and water dispensers, and rotate work to cooler areas when possible.
- Train all workers in First Aid/CPR with an emphasis on recognizing heat stress.
- Share heat illness prevention reminders often, including during tailgate meetings.

Workers should understand their personal limits and recognize that the body may not cool down quickly enough in extreme conditions. Factors that increase the risk of heat stress include:

- High temperatures and humidity
- Not drinking enough water
- Direct sun exposure or other extreme heat sources
- Little or no airflow
- Physical activity without adequate breaks
- Bulky protective clothing or equipment

Do Not Forget the Indoor Heat Exposure Regulations

On June 20, 2024, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board approved California Code of Regulations, Title 8, section 3396, "Heat Illness Prevention in Indoor Places of Employment." The standard applies to most workplaces when indoor temperatures reach 82°F and require safety measures to reduce the risk of heat illness. It took effect on July 23, 2024.

The regulation applies to indoor work areas where the temperature is 82°F or higher while employees are present, including places such as warehouses, restaurant kitchens, and manufacturing plants. Indoor spaces that never exceed 82°F—such as offices with working air conditioning—are generally not affected.

If you have questions about either Cal/OSHA regulation, contact Bob May, Director of Loss Control, at 760.221.8205 or biem47@outlook.com.