



Working Safely In Hot Weather

As temperatures rise over the summer period, it is important to consider the health and safety of the TES workforce. Rail workers are often exposed to the elements and face significant risks during hot weather, including dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. These conditions can not only affect their health and well-being but also can compromise operational efficiency.

Heat exposure can lead to a range of illnesses, which can vary in symptoms and severity. Understanding the differences between dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke is crucial for effective prevention and treatment. Here is a comparison of their symptoms:

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion is a condition that occurs when the body overheats. Symptoms include:

- **Heavy sweating:** Excessive perspiration.
- **Cool, moist skin:** Skin may feel cool and clammy despite the heat.
- **Goosebumps:** Sometimes present even in hot conditions.
- **Faintness:** Feeling lightheaded or dizzy.
- **Fatigue:** Extreme tiredness and weakness.
- **Weak, rapid pulse:** Increased heart rate but weak pulse.
- **Low blood pressure upon standing:** Feeling faint or dizzy when standing up.
- **Muscle cramps:** Painful contractions, often in the legs or abdomen.
- **Nausea:** Feeling sick to the stomach.
- **Headache:** Persistent or throbbing headaches.
- **Irritability:** Mood changes and irritability.
- **Vomiting:** Severe cases may involve vomiting.
- **Pale skin:** Skin may appear pale

DEHYDRATION

Dehydration occurs when the body loses more fluids than it takes in. Symptoms include:

- **Thirst:** Often the first sign.
- **Dry mouth:** Lack of saliva and a dry feeling in the mouth.
- **Fatigue:** Feeling unusually tired or lethargic.
- **Dizziness:** Light-headedness or feeling faint.
- **Confusion:** Difficulty thinking clearly or feeling disoriented.
- **Headache:** Persistent or throbbing headaches.
- **Dark urine:** Urine that is darker in colour than usual.
- **Infrequent urination:** Reduced frequency of urination.
- **Dry skin:** Skin that feels dry and lacks elasticity.
- **Rapid heartbeat:** Increased heart rate.
- **Chills:** Feeling cold despite the heat.
- **Fainting:** Loss of consciousness

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HEAT STROKE

Heat stroke is a severe condition that requires immediate medical attention. Symptoms include:

- **High body temperature:** A core body temperature of 104°F (40°C) or higher.
- **Altered mental state or behaviour:** Confusion, agitation, slurred speech, irritability, delirium, seizures, and coma.
- **Altered sweating:** In heat stroke caused by hot weather, skin may feel hot and dry. In heat stroke caused by strenuous exercise, sweating may be profuse.
- **Nausea and vomiting:** Feeling sick to the stomach or vomiting.
- **Flushed skin:** Skin may turn red as body temperature increases.
- **Rapid breathing:** Breathing may become rapid and shallow.
- **Racing heart rate:** Pulse may significantly increase.
- **Throbbing headache:** A severe headache that may feel like pounding or throbbing.
- **Dizziness and light-headedness:** Feeling faint or unsteady.
- **Lack of sweating:** Despite the heat, the skin may be dry.
- **Muscle weakness or cramps:** Painful muscle contractions or general weakness.
- **Seizures:** In severe cases, heat stroke can cause seizures.
- **Unconsciousness:** Fainting or loss of consciousness

If you suspect someone is experiencing heat stroke, seek emergency medical help immediately.

PREVENTION METHODS

Planning to prevent ill health caused by working in high temperatures is crucial for maintaining health, well-being and productivity. Risks assessments should consider the risk of heat exposure. Here are some effective risk control methods:

- **Maintain Hydration Levels:** Ensure workers have access to plenty of drinking water. Plan and encourage regular hydration breaks to prevent dehydration.

Avoid energy drinks that contain caffeine (e.g. monster / red bull) as these can increase fluid loss which may lead to chronic dehydration; consume water to remain hydrated.



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- Appropriate Clothing / PPE:**
 Provide lightweight, breathable clothing and sun protection gear, such as hats and sunscreen, to help reduce heat retention and protect against UV rays. Consider the effect that necessary protective PPE such as respiratory protection, gloves, hard hats, long trousers and long sleeves have on body temperature and plan heat mitigation measures accordingly.
- Rest Breaks:** Schedule more and longer regular rest breaks in shaded or cool areas to allow workers to recover from heat exposure.
- Work Scheduling:** If possible, adjust work hours to cooler parts of the day, such as early mornings, late afternoons or nighttime, to minimize heat exposure.
- Training and Awareness:** Conduct regular training sessions on recognising the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and the importance of immediate action. Educate workers on the risks and prevention strategies.
- Monitoring and Support:** Implement systems to monitor workers for signs of heat exposure related illnesses. Supervisors should regularly check on workers, especially those in high-risk roles.
- Buddy System:** Encourage workers to look out for each other and report any signs of heat-related illness immediately.
- Cooling Measures:** Depending on the type of work and the location provide access to cooling measures such as fans, air conditioning, cooling vests, or ice packs to help lower body temperature.
- Emergency Preparedness:** Have a clear plan in place for responding to heat-related emergencies, including access to medical care and emergency services

FIRST AID TREATMENT

If someone is experiencing heat exposure, it's crucial to act quickly to prevent serious health issues. Here are some first aid measures to follow:

- Move to a Cooler Area:** Take the affected person to a shaded or air-conditioned place to reduce heat exposure.
- Lie Down and Elevate Legs:** Have the person lie down and raise their legs slightly to improve blood flow.
- Remove Excess Clothing:** Remove tight or heavy clothing to help cool the body.
- Hydrate:** Encourage the person to sip chilled water, a sports drink with electrolytes, or another non-alcoholic beverage without caffeine.
- Cool the Body:** Use cool water to spray or sponge the person and fan them to help lower body temperature. You can also place ice packs or cold, wet towels on the head, neck, armpits, and groin.
- Monitor Symptoms:** Keep a close watch on the person's condition. If symptoms worsen or do not improve, seek medical attention immediately.
- Emergency Response:** If the person shows signs of heat stroke, such as confusion, slurred speech, or unconsciousness, call emergency services immediately and continue cooling efforts until help arrives.

SAFETY FIRST - EVERYONE HOME SAFE

