



July 2021

LOSS CONTROL NEWSLETTER

A

It's Summer, and the Heat Is Here

It's that time of year again, when heat illness is a particularly important safety concern. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), workers may experience longer or more intense heat exposures, and are more likely to engage in strenuous physical activity in the heat, than the general public.

What's the big deal about heat?

Heat illness occurs when your body cannot adequately cool itself by sweating. According to the National Safety Council (NSC), heat-related illnesses can escalate rapidly, leading to delirium, organ damage and even death.

What are the dangers?

If you work in hot conditions, you may be at risk. Here's what to look for:

- **Heat rash** consists of red, irritated bumps and is a sign that hot conditions are affecting your body.
- **Heat syncope (fainting)** can occur when a person is not used to working in a hot environment.
- **Heat cramps** are caused by a loss of salt when sweating. Severe cramps may require a visit to a doctor.
- **Heat exhaustion** occurs if you have lost too much fluid, salt or both through sweating.
- **Heatstroke** occurs when the body's natural cooling processes stop working, and the ill person stops sweating. Symptoms of heatstroke include very hot and dry skin, confusion, convulsions, seizures and loss of consciousness. Heatstroke is serious and can lead to death.

What can you do to keep cool?

Heat-related illnesses can be prevented by taking these steps while working in hot conditions:

- Drink water throughout the day. In hot conditions, you should aim for one cup every 15 to 20 minutes.
- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing.
- Consuming sports drinks helps replace the salt you lose when you sweat.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can both cause dehydration.
- Take frequent breaks in a cool, shady place.
- If the temperature spikes suddenly or you are new to working in hot conditions, take more frequent breaks, and gradually build up your workload while your body adapts.
- If you experience symptoms of heat illness, tell your supervisor and take a break in a cool, shaded area.



Working Safely in Trenches

Working in a trench may not seem particularly dangerous, but trenching accidents kill and injure many workers every year. The most serious hazard is collapse or cave-in. The risks of cave-in depend on the type of soil, the shape of the trench, the depth of the excavation, the protective structures used, and other factors. Before you enter a trench on the job, a person with knowledge about assessing trench conditions for safety should inspect the trench.

Trenches that are five feet or deeper must have protective systems to prevent cave-ins, unless the entire excavation is made in stable rock. When you enter and exit a trench, always use a designated entry or exit point (e.g., *ladder, ramp or stairway*). The only exception to this is for trenches shallower than four feet. A special entrance is not required for these trenches, but it is still a good idea to use one.

When working in a trench, always place all debris, materials and soil you remove from the trench at least two feet from the edge of the excavation.

Always follow these practices:

- Stand away from vehicles being loaded or unloaded to avoid being struck by falling materials.
- Keep heavy equipment away from trench edges.
- If the trench is located near a roadway with vehicle traffic, wear high-visibility clothing.
- Never stand or work under a load being lifted by lifting or digging equipment.
- Never enter a trench where water has accumulated, unless your employer has provided protective measures such as water removal equipment or a safety harness and lifeline.

If you have any questions or need assistance regarding workplace safety, please contact your independent insurance agent or the Auto-Owners Loss Control HelpLine at 855.586.5388, or send an email to LossControlSupport@aoins.com.

Any information and recommendations contained in this communication have been obtained from sources believed to be reliable. However, Auto-Owners Insurance Group accepts no legal responsibility for the accuracy, sufficiency, or completeness of such information. Additional safety and health procedures may be required to comply with local, state, or federal law. Content in this document is not legal advice, nor does it amend the terms, conditions, or coverages of any insurance policy issued by Auto-Owners Insurance Group. Copyright © 2021 BLR® - Business & Legal Resources. All rights reserved.