

# Extreme Heat Safety



Employees and residents exposed to extreme heat or who regularly work in hot environments have a high potential for experiencing heat-related illnesses. Extended exposure to extreme heat can cause severe conditions, including heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat rash, and sunburn. These illnesses occur when the body is [unable to cool down](#) and may result in death. On average, heat causes 130 deaths per year, making it the [deadliest type of weather in the U.S.](#)

Prevention of heat stress is crucial for employees and residents exposed to the summer elements. They must understand what heat stress is, how it can affect them, and how to protect themselves.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [groups vulnerable to extreme heat](#) include those [ages 65 and over](#), infants and children, individuals with chronic conditions, [outdoor workers](#), athletes, and [low-income residents](#).

[Risk Factors](#) for heat-related illnesses:

- High levels of humidity
- Dehydration
- Obesity
- Fever
- Prescription drug use
- Heart disease
- Mental illness
- Poor circulation
- Sunburn
- Alcohol use

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## Heat Stroke

Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to control its temperature, which can rise several degrees in minutes, resulting in permanent disability or death without treatment.

### Symptoms:

- High body temperature (103 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
- Hot, red, dry, or damp skin
- Fast, strong pulse

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- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Loss of consciousness

**What to do:**

- **Call 911 right away**
- Move to a cooler place
- Use cool cloths or a cool bath to lower the body temperature
- Don't give the person anything to drink



## Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of water and electrolytes, typically due to sweating.

**Symptoms:**

- Heavy sweating
- Cold, pale, and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness or weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Fainting

**What to do:**

- Call 911 or seek medical help if an individual is vomiting, symptoms are getting worse, or symptoms last longer than an hour
- Move to a cool place
- Loosen clothing
- Use cool, wet cloths to lower the body temperature
- Sip water



## Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are muscle pains caused by a low level of water and electrolytes in the body due to sweating. This condition may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.

**Symptoms:**

- Heavy sweating during intense exercise
- Muscle pain or spasms



### What to do:

- Stop physical activity and move to a cool place
- Drink water or a sports drink
- Wait for cramps to go away before resuming physical activity
- Seek medical help if cramps last longer than an hour or if an individual has a heart condition

## Heat Rash

Heat rash is a skin irritation caused by excessive sweating during hot, humid weather.

### Symptoms:

- Red clusters of small blisters that look like pimples on the skin (usually on the neck, chest, groin, or in elbow creases)

### What to do:

- Stay in a cool, dry place
- Keep the rash dry
- Use over-the-counter powders or ointments to soothe the rash

## Sunburn

Sunburn results from overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays and is a serious risk factor for skin cancer.

### Symptoms:

- Painful, red, and warm skin
- Blisters on the skin

### What to do:

- Stay out of the sun until the skin heal
- Place cool cloths on sunburned areas
- Take a cool bath
- Moisturize sunburned areas
- Don't break blisters



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## Prevention

You can help prevent illnesses caused by extreme heat by educating residents and providing employees with [the proper training](#) and a safe work environment.

Best practices for reducing heat stress amongst employees [include](#):

- Limit time in the extreme heat, and increase recovery time spent in a cooler environment.
- Ensure that cool drinking water is available and easily accessible at all times.
- Provide fully shaded or air-conditioned areas for resting and cooling down.
- Implement [modified work schedules](#):
  - Reschedule all non-essential outdoor work for a cooler day.
  - Schedule the more physically demanding work during cooler parts of the day.
  - Rotate workers and split shifts when possible.
  - Incorporate plenty of rest breaks throughout the day.
- Implement [a heat acclimatization plan](#):
  - Acclimatization is a physical change that allows the body to build a tolerance to working in the heat. By gradually increasing workloads and exposure to the heat and taking frequent breaks, the body will become accustomed to extreme temperatures. This will typically take up to two weeks.
  - New employees should begin with 20 percent of their workload and gradually increase it by the day.
- [Train employees](#) on the health effects of extreme heat, how to respond to heat illness, and prevention methods.
- Implement a buddy system for workers to check in with each other throughout the day.

### Contact our Risk Control Services Team

for more resources and answers to your housing organization's risk-related questions.

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