

Summer Heat Tips for Outdoor Worker Safety

We advise all outdoor worker to be extra cautious in the heat.



Signs of Heat Stress and Exhaustion

- skin rash
- heavy sweating
- feel dizzy
- feel sick or throw up
- rapid breathing and heartbeat
- headache
- trouble concentrating
- muscle cramps
- extreme thirst
- dark urine and urinate less

Signs of Heat Stroke

- high body temperature
- drowsy or fainting
- confused
- less coordinated
- very hot and red skin

How can extreme heat affect my health?

Extreme heat can affect your health in a number of ways. It can cause a heat illness such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. It can make existing health conditions worse. In some situations, it can result in permanent disability or death.

Why am I more likely to be affected?

Outdoor workers are more vulnerable to the heat than other people because they are usually exposed to the weather with little or no shelter.

In the Lower Mainland, seasons can go from cool to hot very quickly. This can make it harder to get used to the weather, especially in the beginning of the hotter weather. It increases the chances of a heat illness.

You are more likely to have the heat affect your health if any of these situations apply to you:

- You already have a health condition.
- You are not used to the summer heat.
- You take certain medicines, such as water pills (diuretics) and medicines for heart conditions, mental health conditions, and allergies.

When should I stop working?

You should stop working if you have any signs of a heat illness. If you start to feel sick while working in the heat, let your boss and fellow workers know.

Spend a few hours in a cool place. You need this time to lower your body temperature.

If you are in a cool place only for a short time, your body might feel cooler on the outside but it has not yet cooled down on the inside. You could still get a heat illness.

In this province, you have the legal right to stop work if you do not feel safe. Your boss cannot discipline or penalize you. Your boss is allowed to assign you to other work out of the heat for a short time, but you are to be paid your regular pay.

Did you know?

In 2021, WorkSafeBC has 115 claims from workers related to heat stress. This was almost 3 times the total number reported over the previous 4 years.

Workers from hot countries are just as likely to be affected by the heat. Our temperatures have higher peaks and change quicker than places like Jamaica and Mexico.

What can I do to stay safe?

Before the heat season

- Make sure your worksite has a heat emergency plan and know what it says.
- Learn the signs of heat stress, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.
- Learn what to do when you or a fellow worker shows signs of a heat illness.
- Pair up with another worker so that you can look for signs of heat illness in each other. Encourage everyone you work with to pair up with another worker as well.

Why pair up?

A person becomes less aware and alert with heat. They might not know they are suffering a heat illness. You can watch out for signs in each other.

During extreme heat

- Stay up-to-date with the weather forecast because it can change quickly.
Ways to do this:
 - Tune in to local weather reports and alerts.
 - Use a weather app like WeatherCAN.
- Talk to your boss about ways workers prevent heat illness and what to do should it happen.
- See if your work can be done earlier or later in the day so you avoid the hottest time of the day.
- Take breaks often.
- Drink lots of water. Keep bottles of water close by.
- Remind others to take breaks and drink water.
- Watch for early signs of a heat illness in yourself and others, even those you think should be used to the heat.
- Check indoor temperatures where you rest or sleep. If the temperature is above 31°C in the day and does not drop much at night, it is not a safe place to stay.
- Cool your feet in a tub of water. This can help cool your body.

What is expected of my employer?

Your employer must have an extreme heat plan in place. This includes providing water, shade, and times during the day to rest and cool down.

Your employer should display at your worksite or give out information about the risks of extreme heat in languages workers can read.

Your employer should monitor the impact these have on workers: humidity, types of work, clothing, and all sources of heat.

Your employer should provide workers a cool space for breaks. Break rooms and worker housing can be cooled with window covers, awnings air conditioning, or a heat pump.

During heat events, your employer should make sure transportation is available to take workers for medical help. Expect ambulances to be very busy during this time.

Did you know?

Any worker or employer who has concerns about workplace health and safety can call **WorkSafeBC** and ask for help and a worksite visit.

604-276-3100 or 1-888-621-7233 (1-888-621-SAFE)

When someone shows signs of heat illness

- Try to move the person to a cool place.
- Give them plenty of water.
- Cool their skin down with water or place the person in cool water.
- Call 9-1-1 if it looks like heat stroke.