



HEATING UP

Working in hot temperatures

Working in the hot summer months can be uncomfortable. People can feel tired and irritable. They may be less productive at work and make more mistakes, which results in a greater risk of a serious incident.

In many work situations it may not be possible to control uncomfortable temperatures. For people working outdoors, the temperature cannot be controlled but things like clothing, physical activity and the timing of the work can be carefully managed.

Improving comfort during hot weather

If you can pick the time of day to carry out physically exerting tasks, do them either early in the morning before it gets too hot, or in the evening

If working outdoors, wear a sunhat

- Drink plenty of water, avoid tea, coffee and soft drinks with high sugar content
- Take shorter, more frequent rest breaks
- Wear lighter-coloured and lighter-weight clothing, preferably cotton
- Ensure you are suitably clothed for hot conditions. If you wear a uniform, your employer will need to ensure it is appropriate
- In factories and offices, increase air speed and movement using ventilation systems, windows or individual fans
- Place indoor machinery that produces heat in a well ventilated or isolated area
- If you work indoors, use blinds, curtains or reflective coatings on windows to reduce direct sunlight
- People need time to acclimatise. For the first 5 to 7 days of intense heat, assign lighter duties with longer rest periods.
- Healthy eating should be promoted and fatty foods should be avoided.

It is often hard to predict how temperature will affect people. Different factors affect the way individuals feel



about the heat: age, health, weight, medication, alcohol and the use of illegal substances.

If work is being carried out with appropriate clothing, with no heat source other than the sun, and there is only light to medium physical activity, heat stress is unlikely. The risk of heat stress increases with heavy physical activity, clothing that cannot lose heat, and radiant heat (e.g. from an oven or a furnace).



Read more about working in temperatures on the Department of Labour's health and safety website
www.osh.dol.govt.nz/order/catalogue/381.shtml
www.osh.dol.govt.nz/order/catalogue/102.shtml

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