

Heat Exposure – *The Basics*

It's a well known fact that over-exposure to excessive heat can kill you. However, there are still quite a few people that are seriously injured, or even killed, each year from over-exposure to heat – 594* workers died in 1999 !

Here are some basic rules for working in elevated temperatures:

- Take frequent breaks in shaded and/or air-conditioned areas (buildings, vehicles, beneath trees, etc.)
- When possible, work in shaded areas. Many heavy equipment manufacturers distribute large umbrella shades for this purpose.
- Drink increased quantities of water, or similar substitute, (sports drinks, etc.). Make sure that it's always available to employees. Employees should be encouraged by Supervisors to drink large quantities of these liquids.
- Eat smaller meals before and during work. Also, avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Employees should wear lightweight, light colored (white) clothing.
- Employ "Work Staggering" - employees that normally have jobs that are not subject to heat stress can be rotated into these jobs every few days. Obviously, at-risk employees can be rotated out every few days or hours.
- Supervisors should make frequent, superficial employee evaluations for the standard signs of heat related problems (sweating stops, flushed or ashen colored skin, labored breathing, disorientation, slurred speech, etc.)
- Realize that PPE such as respirators, protective suits (Kevlar, plastic, Tivek, gloves, aprons, etc) can increase the bodies temperature.

* National Safety Council – 2002 *Injury Facts*