



WORKING IN THE HEAT

Once again, some regions across the country have experienced heatwaves. According to experts, this year's summer is going to be hotter than usual. We need to be able to recognize the symptoms described below to make sure that we can accomplish our work in the safest way possible, be it outside in the heat or inside where there is no proper air conditioning. High summer temperatures increase the likelihood of forest fires which negatively impact the air quality index. Just like in the past, this will certainly be a source of concern for workers throughout the year. Do not hesitate to encourage your sisters and brothers to take all the necessary precautions when working during a heatwave.

TAKE PRECAUTIONS

Slow down. Your body will not perform at its best in high temperatures.

Take all the breaks provided for in the collective agreement, if possible, stay away from the heat. Trying to finish your work as quickly as possible is not the answer.

Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration. Stay away from coffee and energy drinks, as they tend to dehydrate the body.

Use sunscreen. Carry it with you and re-apply every 20-30 minutes. Sunburn restricts the body's cooling system.

Wear a hat, and loose, lightweight clothing.

Wash or disinfect your hands frequently.

Maintain salt levels in your body. If you are on a salt-free diet, check with your doctor. Avoid high-protein foods, such as meat and legumes, as they can increase your body's water loss and heat production.

PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO HEAT MAY CAUSE THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

Heat cramps

Usual symptoms: muscle spasms, heavy sweating, extreme thirst, nausea, cold and clammy skin.

- **Treatment:** Move victim to cool, shaded area to rest, and apply firm pressure to cramping muscles. If cramps persist, give victim two glasses of salty water every 10 to 15 minutes. (Mix 5 mg of salt to 1 litre of water).

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Heat exhaustion

Usual symptoms: sweating, weakness, cold and clammy skin, low blood pressure, disorientation, vomiting.



- **Treatment:** Move victim to cool area to rest; give salty water and cover person if shivering. Seek medical help immediately.

Heat stroke

Usual symptoms: weakness, headache, hot and dry skin, dilated pupils, offensive body odour, sharply rising body temperature, pulse pounding and full, elevated blood pressure, delirium or coma.

- **Treatment:** Have victim taken to hospital immediately. While waiting for medical assistance, move victim to cool, shaded area and sponge body with cool water, letting water evaporate to reduce body temperature.

TAKE CARE AND REPORT INCIDENTS

There are no federal regulations on exposure to heat. If you attempt your work and find it to be unsafe, you can exercise your right to refuse unsafe work. How? Inform your supervisor and your shop steward that you wish to exercise your right of refusal, pursuant to clause 33.13 of the collective agreement for members of the urban unit. RSMCs and members of private sector units can exercise their right of refusal according to the appropriate measures included in Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*.

Report every incident or discomfort due to exposure to heat. An investigation must be conducted by the supervisor in the presence of a union representative.

In Solidarity,



Marc Roussel
National Union representative
Health and Safety