



Every year from **May 1 through September 30**, employers in Washington State are required to take steps to protect employees working outdoors from heat illness.

Physically demanding work, heavy clothing, and dehydration can put even the healthiest workers at higher risk for serious heat illness like debilitating heat exhaustion and life-threatening heat stroke.

Heat exhaustion can make workers more susceptible to falls, equipment-related injuries, and other on-the-job safety hazards.

How to prevent heat exhaustion:

- Avoid consuming alcohol and ice water while working.
- Drink plenty of cool fluids; citrus or fruit juices work best.
- Avoid heavy, fatty-type foods.
- Wear light, loose clothing.
- Avoid fatigue; get plenty of rest.
- Replace lost body salts.
- See a doctor if you are not feeling well.

How to recognize heat exhaustion:

- A person is dazed, staggers, or becomes dizzy.
- There is a feeling of nausea or vomiting; the person also can feel chilly.
- Their face looks pale.

There is a weak pulse and body temperature is below normal.
A person is lying out unconscious.

What to do:

- Call for emergency medical assistance. (Review “Care for The Injured”)
- Keep the victim lying down with their head lower than their feet.
- Loosen the victim’s clothing.
- Keep the victim warm. (Remember, one of the results is the person feels chilly.)
- Give fluids if possible. Avoid ice water and alcohol. Salt solutions are best.

Remember:

Both heat exhaustion and sunstroke are serious matters. In both cases, the body is reacting to a life-threatening situation. Do not take chances. Should you begin to feel ill, take a break and drink some cool (not ice) water or something else other than an alcoholic beverage. Both injuries frequently cause a lack of consciousness; in our business, that can lead to a serious injury.

Questions:

Are employers required to keep temperature records?

There is no requirement to maintain temperature records.

When is shade required?

Shade, or another sufficient means for cooling down, must be provided at all times when temperatures reach 100 degrees and is also required at 89 degrees (or other outdoor temperature action levels specified in the rule¹) for

employees when necessary to prevent or recover from heat illness.

What kind of shade is acceptable?

Acceptable shade blocks direct sunlight to the degree that shadows aren't cast under it and it must allow the body to cool off. Shade may be provided by natural or artificial means (e.g., dense tree canopies or tent-like canopies). In addition, shade must be provided in a way that does not expose employees using it to unsafe or unhealthy conditions or deter or discourage access or use.

Can employees use a vehicle for shade?

Shade isn't acceptable when heat, in the area of shade, defeats the purpose of shade: to allow the body to cool.

For example, a car sitting in the sun may block direct sunlight for occupants inside but would not provide acceptable shade unless it is running with the air-conditioning on.

Water

Employers have always been required to provide drinking water no matter the outdoor temperature. When the temperature reaches 89 degrees (or other outdoor temperature action level specified in the rule), employers must provide, and make readily accessible, a sufficient amount of "suitably cool" drinking water to allow each worker to drink at least one quart each hour.

No exact water temperature is required, but 50–60 degrees is recommended.

Cool-Down Rest Periods

How often are these required?

Employers must ensure employees take preventative cool-down rest periods of at least 10 minutes every two hours when temperatures reach 100 degrees.

When temperatures are between 100 and 89 degrees (or other outdoor temperature action levels specified in the rule), employees must be encouraged and allowed to take a preventative cool-down rest period when they feel the need to protect themselves from overheating.

Training

While prior requirements for employee and supervisor training haven't changed, the updated rule requires additional training on heat procedures, cool-down rest breaks, and ways to cool down.

Resources

<https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-training-materials/workshops-events/beheatsmart>