

# Heat Illness Prevention in Indoor Workplaces

## Information for Employees

Many employees working in hot indoor environments such as factories, food trucks, laundries, kitchens, warehouses, and foundries, are often unable to take advantage of heat illness prevention policies that protect employees working outdoors. These employees who work indoors can suffer from heat illness just like employees who work outdoors.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the Heat Illness Prevention in Indoor Places of Employment standard. The standard is found in the California Code of Regulations, title 8, [section 3396](#). This regulation requires employers in most situations to provide access to drinking water and cool-down areas, assess and control hot work areas, closely observe new employees, train employees, and provide timely emergency aid. Most workplaces that have temperatures that reach 82°F or higher must comply with this standard.

### What Can Employees do to Protect Themselves?

- Be familiar with your employer's written Indoor Heat Illness Prevention Program.
  - Know the symptoms of heat illness. Heat illness is a serious medical condition that results when the body cannot cope with the heat. Examples of heat illness symptoms include cramps, headache, nausea, fainting, and dizziness. If untreated, heat illness can lead to heat stroke and even death.
    - Early symptoms: fatigue, heavy sweating, headache, cramps, dizziness, high pulse rate, nausea/vomiting
    - Life-threatening symptoms: high body temperature; red, hot, dry skin; confusion; convulsions; fainting
- Watch for symptoms in yourself and your coworkers. If you feel or observe any heat-illness symptoms, tell your coworkers and supervisor immediately because medical help may be needed. Know who to talk to and how to get help before you start each workday.
  - Tell your supervisor if you are new to working in the heat or have concerns about heat illness.
  - Stay alert to the weather. During a heat wave you are at greater risk of getting sick. You need to watch yourself and coworkers more closely, drink more water, take more breaks, and potentially use other cooling methods.
  - Drink at least one 8-ounce cup of water every 15 minutes or one quart of water every hour during your entire work shift. Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink water. Do not drink alcohol. Choose water over other drinks.
  - Take regular and preventive cool-down rest breaks in employer-provided cool-down areas.
  - Wear proper lightweight clothing that does not restrict heat removal.
  - Employees with certain medical conditions should pay attention and be careful with their



heat exposure because they may have higher risk factors for heat illnesses. Talk to your doctor if you have diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, are taking medicines, or are on a low salt diet.

## Know your Rights

You have a right to water, cool-down rests, and training from your employer on the signs and symptoms of heat illness and what to do if you get sick or notice a coworker get sick. If you work at a job where the indoor temperature reaches or exceeds 82°F, by law your employer must do the following:

- Provide enough cool, fresh drinking water, free of charge, throughout the day.
- Provide preventive cool-down rest periods in cool-down areas that must be below 82°F, blocked from direct sunlight, and shielded from objects that give off heat. Ask for a cool-down break if you need it and rest long enough until you feel healthy enough to return to work.
- Conduct close observation for 14 days, under certain conditions, if you are new to working in the heat and all employees working during a heat wave.

“Heat wave” means any day in which the predicted high outdoor temperature for the day will be at least 80°F and at least 10°F greater than the average high daily outdoor temperature for the preceding five days.

- Measure the temperature and record the readings when it is suspected that the temperature reaches or exceeds 82°F.
- Use control measures such as insulation, heat-reflective surfaces, air conditioning, fans, ventilation, modified work practices, as well as personal heat-protective equipment like cooling vests, jackets, and neck wraps, when certain conditions are met.

- Provide training on various heat illness prevention topics, such as recognizing signs and symptoms of heat illness, contacting emergency medical services, and the employer’s heat illness prevention program.
- Provide access to the employer’s heat illness prevention program.
- Implement procedures that actively involve employees and their unions representatives in the following:
  - Planning and recording the measurements of temperature.
  - Identifying and evaluating all environmental risk factors for heat illness.



## Resources

All workers have a right to a safe and healthful workplace, regardless of immigration status, and may file confidential complaints about workplace safety and health hazards with Cal/OSHA. Workers with work-related questions or complaints may contact the Cal/OSHA Call Center in English or Spanish at 833-579-0927 or at [www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Complaint.htm](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/Complaint.htm). Learn more about heat illness prevention on Cal/OSHA’s website: [99calor.org](http://99calor.org) or call the Heat Helpline at 1-877-99-CALOR (1-877-992-2567).

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