



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WORKER PROTECTION LAWS IN THE SUMMER

Floridians are subjected to hot and humid weather for much of the year. Our weather can be especially tough on people who spend a lot of time working outdoors. It's important that outdoor workers prepping for a long summer understand the importance of staying hydrated and cool while they're on the clock. It's also critical that workers and their families educate themselves on the laws pertaining to working in extreme conditions and the rights they have if an injury or illness were to occur.

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WHO IS AT RISK?

Workers who spend a large portion of their shift outside are at high risk for heat-related illness due to extreme heat. These professions include construction workers, landscapers, agricultural workers, baggage handlers, oil and gas industry workers and many others. According to OSHA, thousands of workers become sick from heat exposure each year. Some even die as a result.¹

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¹ <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatstress/#illness>



WHEN "HOT" IS "TOO HOT"

To help determine when someone is at the highest risk for developing heat-related health problems, OSHA created the following heat index. This accounts for temperature and humidity in a single value to help workers understand when they need to take protective measures.

| TEMPERATURE | RISK LEVEL | PROTECTIVE MEASURES |
|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Less than 91°F | Lower | Basic heat safety and planning |
| 91° to 103°F | Moderate | Implement precautions and heighten awareness |
| 103° to 115°F | High | Additional precautions to protect workers |
| Greater than | Very High to Extreme | Triggers even more aggressive protective measures |

SAFETY CONCERNS

When “high” and “very high” levels of risk are reached, workers are in serious jeopardy of developing certain heat-related illnesses, especially when proper precautions aren’t taken. These illnesses include:

- ✓ Heat stroke
- ✓ Heat Syncope
- ✓ Heat exhaustion
- ✓ Heat Cramps
- ✓ Rhabdomyolysis
- ✓ Heat Rash



SYMPTOMS OF HEAT STRESS

It's crucial outdoor workers know how to recognize heat stress symptoms. Different conditions have varying symptoms, but in general, anyone experiencing dizziness, confusion, nausea, heat rash, muscle spasms, clammy skin, light-headedness or an elevated body temperature should immediately rest and potentially seek medical attention to avoid further complications.

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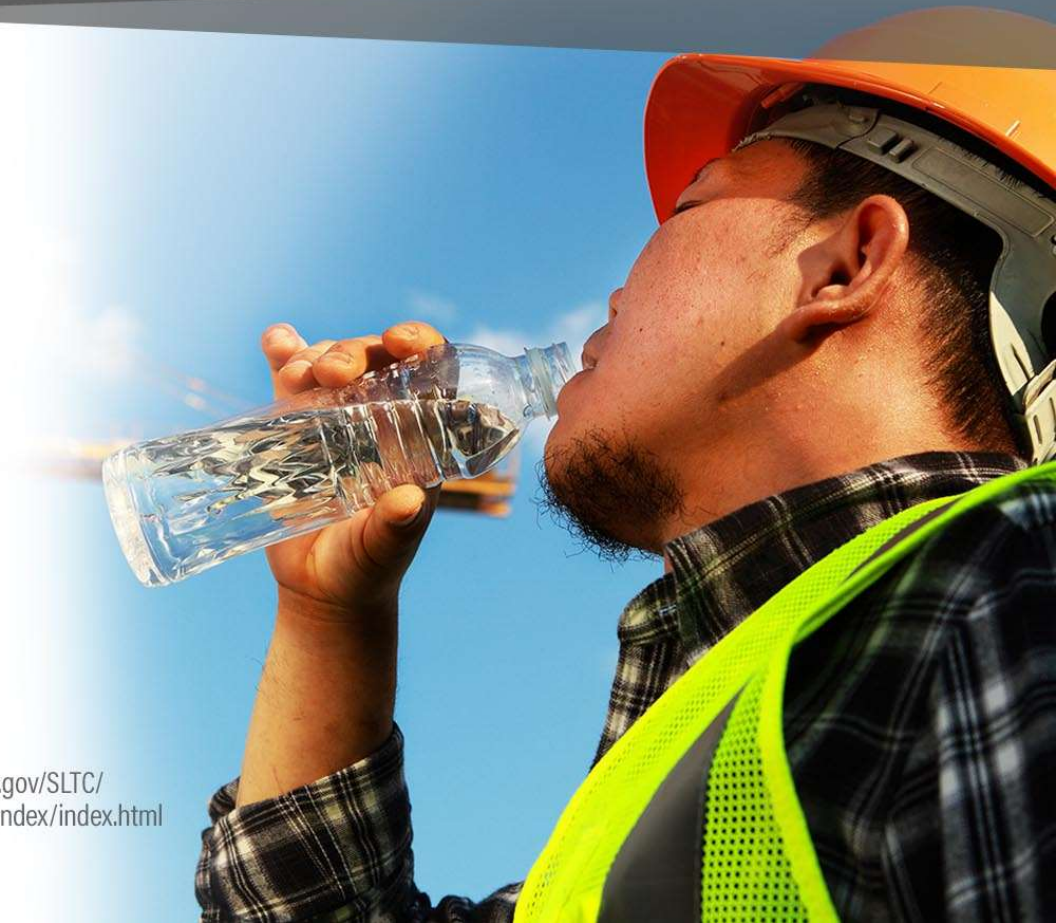


HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Drink plenty of water and take rest cycles as needed. Be sure to protect your body with the appropriate clothing, like light-colored, loose-fitting shirts and pants, sunscreen, eye protection and a hat. Always remove heavy protective gear when resting, and avoid drinking ice-cold beverages or over-hydrating. OSHA reports workers new to an outdoor job are at the highest risk, so acclimate yourself slowly.²

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² https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/index.html



HOW THE LAW CAN PROTECT YOU

Though there are no specific laws regarding working outdoors and what constitutes excessive heat, all workers have the right to a safe working environment under the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act of 1970. The act establishes employer responsibilities and safety standards under federal law to ensure employees are safe and healthy on the job. OSHA also prevents employers from punishing or retaliating against employees who make official complaints.

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EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

You have the right to a safe workplace, and it's your employer's responsibility to ensure that's possible. Your employer should be implementing the following heat stress prevention strategies:

- ✓ **Allow workers to drink water at liberty**
- ✓ **Provide shaded rest or break areas**
- ✓ **Notify employees of hazards, such as excessive heat**
- ✓ **Train employees or inform them of how to minimize heat stress or illness**
- ✓ **Provide adequate safeguards and protective gear**

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PROVISIONS AREN'T MET

When employers aren't providing an adequately safe workplace for their employees, they could potentially be held liable for any health problems or injuries that develop or occur as a result. An employee has the right to contact OSHA, file a complaint and have their work conditions inspected. Employees also have the option to seek legal action against their employer and receive financial compensation.

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