TDCJ Risk Management's

Training Circular

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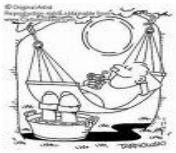
TEXAS SULTRY SUMMERS

Summer is just around the corner. Summer time is perfect to go swimming, watch the kids play baseball, football, outdoor activities, BBQ's, or just sitting in the shade trying to stay cool while drinking some ice cold lemonade. The truth is we would rather be sitting in the cool air conditioning.



But we can't put our lives on hold until it gets cooler. The grass is still going to grow. Cars are still going to need to be washed, and the kids still want to play outside. For these first timers in the Texas summer heat and humidity, you will now know the meaning of a Texas Summer before long.

Since we have to go on with our daily activities in the heat, we can take precautions to reduce the risk of a heat related illness.

Have you ever heard someone say **"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"?** That statement is very true when dealing with a heat related illness. It is a lot easier to prevent a heat related illness, than to treat a heat related illness.

During prolonged heat waves, the risk of heat-related illnesses, injuries and deaths climbs dramatically.

According to the health experts, one of the most dangerous factors during excessively hot weather is the addition of humidity. The combination of heat and humidity results in heat stress on humans and animals by interfering with the body's ability to cool itself through sweating.

The Agency understands that the temperature levels affect the unit staff who are working in areas of high temperature and humidity levels. Staff members come to work at 5:30 a.m. and are sweating at 5:40 a.m. That is what you call HOT!

The Agency has Administrative Directive AD-10.64 that addresses the temperature extremes in the workplace. The Agency takes measures to protect staff and offenders within the agency from heat related illnesses. This Directive contains information on the preventive measures to take as well as a Heat and Humidity Matrix chart. The TDCJ Department of Preventive Medicine in conjunction with UTMB will conduct employee annual heat awareness training in the month of May and will have the training completed by June 1st.

As summer months approach, the incidence of heat related illnesses rise. ***Recognition and prompt treatment of these syndromes are imperative.*** Victims of prolonged or high heat can develop heat cramps or heat exhaustion. If heating continues, the condition can progress to a heat stroke and death.

How can you avoid heat illness during excessive heat?

As record-breaking high temperatures are here to stay for a few months throughout Texas, the Texas Department of Health (TDH) has issued a list of precautions people can take to reduce the risk of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. All Texans are urged to follow these precautions.

* Drink two to five times more water and non-sugar, non-alcoholic beverages to replace fluids lost in perspiration.

* Wear loose-fitting, light-weight, light-colored clothing and wide brimmed hats while in the sun.

* Use sunscreen with an SPF-15 or more.

* Take frequent breaks limiting physical activity.

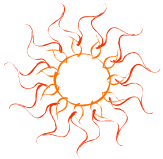
* Rest in a cool place.
* Stay in an air conditioned area if possible. If no air conditioning is available, fans are helpful.

* Use the buddy system between co-workers in high heat jobs.
* Older people should have a friend or relative check on them or call twice a day.

* When planning activities choose cooler hours to be outdoors.

* Before prolonged work or exercise outdoors, listen to weather forecasts and give special attention to advisories.

What are the Symptoms



Heat Cramps-are the most benign heat syndrome. They develop usually following strenuous exercise in muscles that have been subjected to extensive work. The pain is brief, intermittent and crampy but may be excruciating.
Treatment consists of rest in a cool environment and replacement of fluids.

Heat Exhaustion-is the most common heat syndrome. The warning signs of heat exhaustion can be mild or severe, but all important danger signals. Symptoms include weakness, anxiety, fatigue, thirst, dizziness, headache, paleness, muscle cramps, nausea or vomiting and faintness. The onset is usually sudden and the duration of collapse brief.
Treatment consists of moving the patient to a cool area and having them lie down and elevate the feet. Spontaneous recovery then usually starts taking place. If the patient is fully alert encourage small sips of water.

Heat Stroke-is a true medical emergency. Heat exhaustion can progress to a heat stroke. A sudden change in the level of consciousness in a setting of heat exposure suggests the possibility of a heatstroke. Heat strokes occur when the body's cooling system fails The skin is hot and dry, pulse rate is rapid, respirations are rapid and weak. Coma, paralysis and death can follow if emergency treatment is not immediately given.
Treatment-once a heatstroke is suspected rapid, aggressive therapy aimed at lowering the body temperature should be initiated immediately by whatever means available. In the field, remove the patient from the external sources of heat, remove clothing, and promote evaporative cooling by applying cool or iced water to the entire skin surface by sponging or splashing, accompanied by fanning either by hand or mechanical means. This should be continued throughout transportation to an emergency room receiving facility, and should be continued within the facility as well. Always transfer heat stroke victims to a medical facility.

Heat can be fatal to anyone, but people over 60 years old appear to be higher risk for death from heat illness, especially if they are frail or have pre-existing heart disease, respiration problems or diabetes. To lesser extent, babies and young children, people with a history of alcoholism and others using certain drugs and medications are at high risk of heat illness. People most at risk of heat illness from exertion may include; athletes, military personnel, and manual laborers.

Can you help someone with heat exhaustion?

Help the victim gradually cool off with water or non-alcoholic, caffeine-free drinks. Other measures include cool showers, rest in a cool environment.

Can you help someone with a heat stroke?

Get the victim to the shade or a cooler area, call ***9-1-1*** for emergency medical assistance and use any means to start cooling the body, such as spraying with water or fanning vigorously. Continue efforts until the victims temperature drops to 101° F-102° F. By the time you feel thirsty, you are already significantly dehydrated. Other people, especially the elderly have impaired thirst mechanism and are more likely to dehydrate.

Animals

Animals are also susceptible to heat stroke, or hyperthermia, which is considered an emergency as it is with people. Signs in animals include excessive panting, increased body temperature, heart rate, or respiratory rate, unusual salivation, collapse, stupor, seizures, or coma, redder than normal gums.
Treatment– get the animal out of the direct heat and spray it with cool water or place water-soaked towels on the head, neck, feet, chest and abdomen. Take the animal to the veterinary hospital. Animals can't explain their needs, so it is up to us to take extra care during hot weather conditions, to ensure their needs are met.

Heat Advisory

The national weather service issues alerts for excessive heat on a county-by-county basis. The alerts are broadcast on NOAA Weather radio and on local radio and television stations. The parameters of an excessive heat watch, warning, and advisory vary by location.

* **Excessive Heat Watch–** means conditions are favorable for an event to meet or exceed local excessive heat warning criteria in the next 12 to 48 hours.
* **Excessive Heat Warning-** means that heat values are forecast to meet or exceed locally defined warning criteria for at least two days.
* **Excessive Heat Advisory-** means hazardous heat conditions have begun or will begin within 36 hours and, if caution is not exercised, they could become life threatening.

Fiction

It's always good to exercise no matter how hot is.

Fact

Many heat emergencies are experienced by people excercising or working during the hottest parts of the day. Reduce, eliminate, or reschedule strenuous activities. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day which is usually in the morning between 4:00 am and 7:00 am.

Fiction

Can you get sunburned only on really hot days?

Fact

UV exposure is a year-round issue-you can sustain damage on the ski slopes just as on the beach, and clouds provide only partial protection.

Water Safety

Now that the hot days are upon us, one great way to stay cool is swimming or taking that boat to the lake. Whatever you are doing around the water can be deadly if proper water safety is not practiced. The following are some safety tips from the American Red Cross:

* According to the American Red Cross learning to swim is the best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around water. Always swim with a buddy; never swim alone. The American Red Cross offers courses for people of any age or swimming ability. To enroll in a swimming course, contact your local Red Cross Chapter today.
* Swim in areas supervised by a lifeguard or an adult. *(if swimming in a unit pool, use extreme caution as a lifeguard may not be present).*

* Read and obey all rules and posted signs.
* Children or inexperienced swimmers should take precautions, such as wearing a U.S. coast guard-approved personal floatation device when around water.

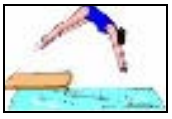
* Watch out for the dangerous ***"too's"***-too tired, too cold, too far to swim.
* Set rules for the whole family to follow based on swimming abilities.

* Be knowledge of the water environment you are in and the potential hazards, such as depth, currents, obstructions.

* Pay attention to weather conditions and forecasts. Get out of the water at the first indication of bad weather.

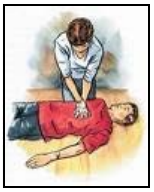
* Use a feet-first entry when entering the water.

* Enter head-first only when clearly marked for diving.



* Do not mix alcohol with swimming, diving or boating. Alcohol impairs your judgment.

* Know how to prevent, recognize, and respond to emergencies.
* Knowing how and when to administer CPR in an emergency situation will save a life. Your local chapters of the American Heart Association, the American Red Cross, and local hospitals are good sources for finding a CPR course in your area. Taking a CPR class could help save a life-someday.



The pool, lake, and the beach are a great place to have fun with family and friends. Keep these safety tips in your mind and have a great time.

A successful team beats with one heart unknown

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