

## Managing the risks of working in heat

Employers have duties under the WHS legislation to manage the risks of working in hot weather and protect worker health and safety.

SafeWork NSW has a page of resources on working in hot conditions [HERE](#).

SafeWork NSW says the employer must provide suitable training and instruction so that workers understand how to manage risks of working in hot weather:

- “commence work well hydrated, and fit for work
- consult with the PCBU regarding workplace heat management and monitoring
- eat regular meals and snacks to help replace salt and electrolytes lost through sweating
- drink enough water while working to maintain adequate fluid replacement – at least a small cup (200ml) of cool (not cold) water every 15-20 minutes
- never replace water with energy, caffeinated drinks or alcohol
- always use any mechanical aids provided (eg fans, cooling units, trolleys, etc)
- take their rest breaks in air conditioned areas or at the very minimum, in a shaded area
- remove any unnecessary PPE – only if safe to do so.
- if necessary, ingest crushed ice and/or apply ice towels”

Have a look at what your risk level is by using this interactive heat stress calculator developed by the Queensland WHS Regulator. (This [BOM link](#) will give you a humidity reading for your area)

Above 35 degrees, the human body’s ability to cool itself reduces. The number of days per year over 35 degrees in Western Sydney has increased from an average of 9.5 days per year in the 1970s to 15.4 days per year in the last decade.

Heat-related illness can be experienced well below 35 degrees:

- feeling hot, weak and fatigued
- clammy skin
- headache
- loss of concentration, poor judgement, irritability
- confusion
- clumsiness, slower reaction times
- slurred speech
- intense thirst
- nausea and vomiting
- rapid breathing and shortness of breath
- fast, weak pulse rate; palpitations
- tingling, numbness of fingers and/or toes
- visual disturbance
- dizziness, fainting (particularly when standing)
- seizures and unconsciousness (in extreme cases)

If a worker experiences any of these symptoms, they need to immediately:

- be moved to a cool place that has circulating air
- have all tight clothing loosened and unnecessary garments removed, including PPE
- drink frequent, small amounts of cool (not cold) water
- seek immediate medical advice if their symptoms don’t improve.

