

# Heat Illness Prevention Policy

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**Background:** Every Summer, employees exposed to extremely hot weather run the risk of becoming ill due to the heat. Often, we see the illness becoming fatal because the employer is unprepared to respond or has failed to develop a program for identifying and treating heat illness.

## Definitions:

- **Acclimatization**-- a temporary adaptation of the body to work in the heat that occurs gradually when a person is exposed to the heat. Acclimatization peaks in most people within four to fourteen days of regular work in the heat for at least two hours per day.
- **Heat Illness**-- a serious medical condition resulting from the body's inability to cope with a particular heat load. Heat illness includes:
- **Heat cramps**-- a painful, involuntary muscle spasm that usually occurs during heavy exercise in hot environments. The spasms may be more intense and more prolonged than typical nighttime leg cramps. Inadequate fluid intake often contributes to heat cramps. Muscles most often affected include calves, arms, abdominal wall and back, although heat cramps may involve any muscle group engaged in exercise.
- **Heat exhaustion**-- a condition whose symptoms may include heavy sweating and a rapid pulse, a result of body overheating. Causes of heat exhaustion include exposure to high temperatures, particularly when combined with high humidity, and strenuous physical activity. Without prompt treatment, heat exhaustion can progress to heatstroke, a life-threatening condition.
- **Heat syncope**-- fainting is a mild form of heat illness which results from physical exertion in a hot environment. In an effort to increase heat loss, the skin blood vessels dilate to such an extent that blood flow to the brain is reduced, resulting in symptoms of faintness, dizziness, headache, increased pulse rate, restlessness, nausea, vomiting, and possibly even a brief loss of consciousness. Inadequate fluid replacement which leads to dehydration contributes significantly to this problem.
- **Heat stroke**-- a life-threatening condition that occurs when body temperature reaches 104 F (40 C) or higher. Heatstroke can be brought on by high environmental temperatures, by strenuous physical activity, or by other conditions that raise body temperature. Whatever the cause, you'll need immediate medical attention to prevent brain damage, organ failure or death. Heatstroke is the escalation of two other heat-related health problems: heat cramps and heat exhaustion. In these conditions, you develop signs and symptoms that are milder than those of heatstroke. You can

prevent heatstroke if you receive medical attention or take self-care steps as soon as you notice problems.

- **Environmental risk factors for heat illness**--a working condition that create the possibility that heat illness could occur. These include air temperature, relative humidity, radiant heat from the sun or other sources, conductive heat sources such as the ground, air movement, workload severity and duration, protective clothing and PPE.
- **Personal risk factors for heat illness**-- any factors such as an individual's age, degree of acclimatization, health, water consumption, alcohol consumption, caffeine consumption and the use of prescription medications that affect the body's ability to retain water or other physiological responses to heat.
- **Preventative recovery period**-- a period of time to recover from the heat in order to prevent heat illness.
- **Shade**-- a blockage of direct sunlight. Canopies, umbrellas and temporary structures may be used to provide shade.

**Policy:** The company will provide a workplace in which measures will be taken to prevent and treat heat illness. In addition, training shall be provided to all supervisory and non-supervisory personnel to ensure that they recognize symptoms in employees affected by heat illness and respond immediately and appropriately.

#### **Responsible Job Titles:**

- **General Manager**—Overall responsibility for implementation of the program at the laundry.
- **Production & Service Managers**—Ensures that all Production and Service Department employees are trained. Manages the supply of water availability, sports drinks, PPE, ice and other aids.
- **Safety Champion or designee**—Provide training to all Supervisory and employees. Ensures that inventory of refreshments is adequate.
- **Maintenance Engineer**—Ensure that all equipment such as fans, air conditioning equipment, water fountains, etc. are all in operating condition.
- **Employees**—Must participate in training and follow all procedures and requirements of the program.

## Essential Elements of the Program:

- All employees shall have access to “fresh, pure and suitably cool drinking water. Where drinking water is not plumbed or continuously supplied, it shall be provided in sufficient quantity to provide each employee with one quart of water per hour for drinking. This can be met by providing coolers with cups or other implements appropriate to contain the water.
- Drinking stations and water containers (5 to 10 gallons each) will be provided so that at least 2 quarts per employee are available at the start of each shift.
- Hand sanitizer stations or hand wash stations must be placed immediately next to water stations or dispensing units (if plumbed).
- All employees will be required to sanitize and wash hands immediately before using any water station or dispenser.
- All personal individual water containers or bottles will be suitably labeled to avoid contamination by a coworker.
- The water level of all containers will be checked on a periodic basis (e.g. hourly or every 30 minutes) and more frequently when temperature rises.
- Frequent drinking of water shall be encouraged.
- All employees suffering from heat illness or believing a preventative recovery period is needed shall be monitored for symptoms of heat illness and provided access to shade that is either open to the air or provided with ventilation or cooling and not ordered back to work until symptoms are gone. Access to shade shall be permitted at all times and is required when outside temperatures exceed 80 degrees.
- Employees showing signs or suffering from heat illness should be moved to an air-conditioned space—the main office area, the lunchroom or the conference room and provided with first aid or emergency response.
- As temperatures increase to 95 degrees or higher the “Buddy System” shall be implemented whereby each party shall be responsible for monitoring the other for symptoms of heat illness as described in definitions. Employees shall be allowed to acclimate to increased temperatures by utilizing shade or the provision of drinking water. Employees will be encouraged prior to the shift to take additional water breaks and report to a cool down rest when necessary.
- Employers must also closely observe all employees during a “heat wave”—when temperatures reach at least 80 degrees and are at least 10 degrees higher than the average daily temperature in the preceding 5 days.

- Whenever newly hired employees are introduced to the workplace, they shall be assigned to a “Buddy” who will be responsible for monitoring the newly hired employee for symptoms of heat illness for a minimum of two weeks.

### **Response Procedures to Heat Illness:**

- **Heat Cramps:** When an employee is suspected to have heat cramps, the Production Manager, General Manager or supervisor shall be summoned. The employee shall be moved to a shaded area and cooled down. The employee shall be directed to drink cool water and to stretch the affected muscle groups to alleviate the symptoms of heat cramps. Should the cramps last longer than one hour, the employee shall be taken to (insert *Name of clinic, address and phone number*) for care. A manager shall transport the employee using directions following:

INSERT—Google directions to the clinic from the plant here:

- **Heat Exhaustion:** When an employee is suspected to have heat exhaustion, symptoms of which are:
  - Faintness or dizziness,
  - heavy sweating,
  - nausea,
  - low blood pressure,
  - cool moist pale skin,
  - low grade fever,
  - headache or
  - fatigue,

The nearest supervisor shall be summoned immediately. The employee shall be moved to a shaded area. Lay the employee down and elevate the feet slightly. Loosen the clothing and encourage the employee to drink water. Sponge the employee with cool water. Call 911 and summon medical attention. Have the employee transported to (insert Name and address of Hospital) Notify the General Manager or Production Manager as soon as possible. A supervisor or manager shall wait outside the building for emergency responders to ensure that they can easily access the injured employee. When calling to emergency

responders, ensure that clear directions, cross streets, etc. are communicated to the responders.

(INSERT GOOGLE MAP OF YOUR FACILITY SHOWING NEAREST CROSS STREETS)

- **Heat Syncope or Heat Stroke:** When an employee is suspected to have either heat syncope or heat stroke, a supervisor shall be summoned immediately. Symptoms include:
  - fainting,
  - rapid heartbeat,
  - shallow breathing,
  - dizziness,
  - irritability,
  - cessation of sweating,
  - nausea,
  - headache,
  - Elevated or lowered blood pressure.

Move the employee to a shaded area (air-conditioned office, lunchroom or conference room). Dial 911 for medical attention, immediately. Have the employee transported to the nearest hospital identified in your Emergency Action Plan. Cool the employee by covering with damp sheets or spray with water mist. If the employee can drink, encourage drinking water until medical attention arrives. Notify the General Manager or Production Manager as soon as possible. A supervisor or manager shall wait outside the building for emergency medical team to provide the team with quick access to the injured employee. Ensure that the emergency responders are given clear and concise directions to the plant using diagram/map shown above.

**Training:** Training of all personnel shall be conducted at the time of hire and thereafter annually during the month of March. This time frame is to consider the onset of hot weather.

All persons shall be trained in the following:

- Environmental Risk Factors for heat illness as defined above. The definition shall be read and explained to all persons in a group setting.
- Personal Risk Factors for heat illness as defined above. The definition shall be read and explained to all persons in a group setting.
- The company procedures for complying with the Heat Illness Standard:
  - Group training in the environmental and personal risk factors for heat illness shall be held.
  - Responsible Parties for implementation and monitoring of the program shall be identified and contact information provided to all present.
  - Response Procedures to be initiated whenever an employee is thought to be suffering from heat illness shall be reviewed.
  - The name and address of the nearest hospital shall be provided to all present.
  - The importance of drinking small quantities of water up to 32 ounces per hour shall be stressed.
  - The differing levels of heat illness shall be described, ensuring that all symptoms are identified to the group.
- Training shall review the importance of acclimatization when temperatures start to increase. The body cannot withstand rapid increase in temperatures without measures to mitigate the effect—short breaks, drinking plenty of fluids, and rest.
  - Employees must understand that they shall report to their supervisor immediately if they think they are suffering from heat illness or if they suspect a coworker to be suffering.
- Employees thought to be suffering from heat illness shall be brought to an air-conditioned space. Examples of air-conditioned spaces are the offices, lunchroom or conference room.
- Lone workers (Route Sales and Service Representatives) must be trained in all elements of the program, specifically to understand the signs and symptoms of heat illness. Should a lone worker suspect that he/she is suffering heat illness, he/she must notify a supervisor immediately, find an

air-conditioned space and seek medical attention. Under no circumstance should a lone worker continue to work while experiencing any of the symptoms of heat illness.

- Lone workers (Route Sales and Service Representatives) must be trained to understand that vehicles do not provide shade as defined above and must not be utilized as a location for preventative recovery period. The only exception to this procedure is an air-conditioned vehicle can be utilized for preventative recovery.
- Lone workers (Route Sales and Service Representatives) must be trained to understand the importance of acclimatization when temperatures start to increase.
- Lone workers (Route Sales and Service Representatives) must be trained to understand that bodies cannot withstand rapid increase in temperatures without measures to mitigate the effect—short breaks, drinking plenty of fluids at least 32 ounces of water per hour. This can be accomplished by filling a water vessel before leaving the plant and utilizing customers water dispensers during the course of the day.

The Responsible Party at the company, (insert responsible party name) shall provide the following training to all supervisors and managers upon implementation of the program and subsequently when a new supervisor is assigned to the location:

- Each essential element of the program articulated on page 2.
- Each of the elements on which all employees are to be trained found on page 4.
- Each of the responses to heat illness found on page 3. Supervisors must understand their role in the responses.
- To provide first aid if appropriate for heat illness
- To call for medical attention by dialing 911.
- To provide clear and concise directions to emergency responders to the plant using the map inserted into the program.
- To station a supervisor outside while the emergency team is arriving to direct the team to the injured employee as quickly as possible.

This policy must be made available to all personnel if or when requested upon receiving a written request.



