

PLAN AND RESPOND TO A HEAT EMERGENCY



Safety in Five provides a short guide for a 5-step, 5-minute conversation (e.g., toolbox talks, safety huddles, daily dispatch briefings) that employers can have with workers on workplace safety issues. To make these talks effective customize the information in the steps below with site-specific instructions.

1. Explain Why It Matters

Knowing how to respond to a heat emergency saves lives. Recognizing heat emergencies, planning how to respond when emergencies occur, and training everyone on those plans can reduce the severity of heat-related illnesses. Everyone at work should learn how to respond to a heat emergency because:

- Quick action during a heat emergency saves lives.
- Practice helps workers know what actions to take and reduces panic during an emergency.

2. Tell Workers What They Need to Know

- Know the signs and symptoms of heat emergencies - these include high body temperature, slurred speech, abnormal behavior, seizures, and loss of consciousness (i.e., fainting, collapse). Other symptoms may include staggering, vomiting, acting irrationally or disoriented, having convulsions, and having an elevated heart rate even after resting.
- Know how to get help and who to call. How would you contact your supervisor or emergency medical services? What do you do if you don't have a phone or cellular service?
- Know what to do when someone is experiencing a heat emergency – time is of the essence!
 - Call 9-1-1,
 - move the affected person to a shaded/cool area,
 - cool affected person with cold water or ice,
 - provide the affected person water (if conscious), and
 - monitor the affected person and ensure they are not left alone.
- Know how to direct emergency responders to your work location. Some work locations are difficult for emergency services to find. When every minute counts, be ready to give detailed directions. What do you do if the affected person is in a place that's hard to reach for emergency responders?
- Know that we often push ourselves in the heat and it may be hard to recognize when to take a break in the shade and drink water to prevent a heat emergency. Look out for the signs and symptoms that something is wrong in your body and your coworkers.

3. What can we do?

- Encourage each other to hydrate throughout the day. Check your urine color when you use the bathroom to help you gauge your hydration levels. Darker urine color could indicate that you may need to drink more water.
- Take rest breaks in a shaded or cooled area – these are vital to your safety. You can protect yourself and your coworkers by following rest break schedules. Remember to take off any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or heavy clothing when resting to help cool off.
- Follow the buddy system. Observe each other for any signs and symptoms when working in the heat. NEVER leave someone alone if they do not feel well.
- Understand personal factors (e.g., age, medications, prior conditions, level of physical activity, other behaviors) that can affect people's response to heat. If you are new or returning to work from leave, you may need time to get used to working in the heat.
- If you don't feel well, or notice a coworker doesn't feel well, speak up. Do not try to power through the work.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing when possible.

4. Let's Talk About It – Quick Conversations Lock in Knowledge

- What are the signs and symptoms of a heat emergency?
- What contributes to a higher risk of heat emergencies?
- What steps should you take if you see or suspect a heat emergency?

Tip: Be sure to encourage workers to speak up when they see a dangerous situation. Ensure they know that by speaking up they are helping to create a safe workplace for all.

Learn more about a [worker's right to refuse dangerous work](#).

5. How to Report a Concern

Remind workers who to contact at the job site or your company if there's a safety problem that needs fixing.

Job Site Safety Contact Name:

Phone:

Email:

OSHA: **Phone:** 800-321-6742 **Website:** www.osha.gov/contactus
For more information on OSHA's heat resources visit: www.osha.gov/heat

Notes