

Master Brewers Safety Toolbox Talk



Brewery Worker Heat Illness Prevention

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Overview

According to OSHA, “every year, dozens of workers die and thousands more become ill while working in hot or humid conditions.” Working in high-temperature or humid environments can put serious strain on the human body, leading to illnesses like heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and heat cramps. This Toolbox Talk is about preventing these risks and keeping ourselves and others safe while working.

What Is Heat Illness (Stress)

Heat illness happens when your body struggles to cool itself down. This can be caused by

- **High temperatures:** Obviously, the hotter it is, the greater the risk.
- **Direct sunlight:** Sun exposure adds significant heat gain.
- **Humidity:** Humid air makes it harder for sweat to evaporate, reducing your body’s primary cooling mechanism.
- **Strenuous activity:** The harder you work, the more heat your body generates.
- **Dehydration:** Not drinking enough fluids throws off your entire system’s balance.

Recognizing Warning Signs

It is crucial to listen to your body and be aware of heat stress symptoms:

- **Excessive sweating:** While sweating is good, feeling constantly drenched could be a warning sign.
- **Headache, dizziness, and nausea:** These indicate your body is overheating.
- **Muscle cramps:** Painful cramps could be a sign of dehydration or electrolyte imbalance.
- **Fatigue, weakness, and confusion:** Your brain needs proper cooling to function effectively.
- **Elevated body temperature:** A body temperature above 100.4°F (38°C) requires immediate attention.

Prevention Is Key

There are some simple steps that can be taken to stay safe and avoid heat stress:

- **Hydration is king:** Drink plenty of water, even if you don’t feel thirsty. Aim for 1 cup (8 oz) every 15–20 min, even before you start sweating. Avoid sugary drinks, caffeine, and alcohol, as they can dehydrate you further.
- **Dress the part:** Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothing. Breathable fabrics like cotton are ideal.
- **Seek shade:** Whenever possible, work in shaded areas or take breaks indoors with air conditioning.
- **Pace yourself:** Avoid strenuous activity during the hottest part of the day. Take frequent breaks and cool down in the shade.

Buddy System

- **Communicate:** Tell your supervisor or buddy if you experience any heat stress symptoms. Don’t wait until you feel unwell.
- **Look out for each other!** Having a buddy system allows you to monitor each other for signs of heat stress and act quickly if needed. Check in regularly, share water, and encourage breaks.

Remember: Heat Stress Is Preventable!

By following these simple tips and looking out for ourselves and each other, we can have a safe and productive summer season.

Additional Resources

www.osha.gov/heat
www.brewersassociation.org/brewing-industry-updates/dont-let-the-heat-stress-you-out-tips-for-keeping-your-cool
www.osha.gov/heat/more-resources
www.osha.gov/heat/employer-responsibility
www.osha.gov/heat/worker-information
www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/rulemaking
www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/FactSheet_KeepingWorkersWellHydrated.pdf

If you have any questions or comments regarding this Toolbox Talk, please contact a member of the [Brewery Safety Committee](#).

For more information on brewery safety, please visit the Brewery Safety website at mbaa.com/brewresources/brewsafety