

# MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
MS AGRICULTURAL AND  
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

*Prevent Heat Stress*

Spring has sprung and before we know it old summer will be here. As summer creeps in we need to be aware of the potential for heat stress and ways that we can take care of ourselves during the grueling summer months.

According to OSHA, in 2014 there were 2,630 heat-related illnesses and 18 deaths from heat stroke and other related causes. Heat illnesses and deaths are preventable!

Following we shall discuss heat-related illnesses and tips on self-protection:

## **HEAT STRESS CAN BE VERY DANGEROUS!**

- Working outdoors in hot, humid weather can result in heat stress which occurs when our bodies build up more heat than they can handle.
- Outdoor work where we're exposed to the sun for long periods of time, as in agriculture or construction work, makes us especially vulnerable for heat stress.
- Acute heat stress can be life-threatening, requiring immediate medical help.
- Knowing the steps to take if a co-worker shows signs of heat stress can be a great help for them.

## **FACTORS THAT CAUSE ILLNESSES-**

- ~Temperature
- ~Dizziness
- ~Amount of air movement
- ~Physical Activity
- ~Radiant temperature of surroundings

## **RECOGNIZING HEAT ILLNESSES-**

Heat illnesses encompass a number of different types of which are heat rash, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

- Heat stroke, which occurs suddenly, is the most life-threatening and requires immediate medical attention.
- Heat illness symptoms can vary. Following are some of the most common ones:
  - ~Exhaustion
  - ~Dizziness or fainting
  - ~Headaches
  - ~Aggressive or irrational behavior
  - ~Nausea
  - ~Severe thirst/dry mouth
  - ~Muscle weakness
  - ~Chills
  - ~Loss of coordination
  - ~Confusion, slurred speech
- It is important to stay calm, but act quickly when you think that someone is showing signs of heat stress.

## **HIGH TEMPERATURE + HIGH HUMIDITY + PHYSICAL ACTIVITY = HEAT ILLNESS**

## **RESPONSES TO HEAT ILLNESSES-**

- Move the victim to a cool, shady area.
- Have someone call for emergency medical help. (Make sure that all employees are familiar with the location of posted emergency contact numbers and the 911 number).

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MAFES/MSU-ES (662) 566-2201  
Excerpts: Safety Smart magazine (summer, 2009)  
Gemplers.com  
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- Make sure that you or someone else is certified in First Aid/CPR and can be reached ASAP.
- Remove the victim's outer clothing (jacket, hat, etc.) as well as any personal protective equipment (PPE). The jacket or other wet items may restrict blood flow. If the victim has been spraying pesticides, don't touch the outer clothing as it may be contaminated with the pesticide residue. A good idea is to put on nitrile or latex gloves to be extra safe.
- Cool the victim off. If it is available, use a sponge with cool water on their body and legs. Sponge or splash cool water on their legs, face, neck, hands, and forearms.
- If the victim is conscious, have them drink as much cool water as possible.
- Try to keep the victim calm and still until emergency medical arrives.

## **PROTECT YOURSELF-**

- Learn to recognize the symptoms of heat stress and how to treat them.
- On hot days, don't spare the water. Drink often during the day and you might sprinkle some hints of salt or salty foods, but no salt tablets.
- Wear loose clothing made from cotton and other fabrics which allow air to pass through.
- Gauge your work habits and take sufficient breaks.
- In the spring, gradually acclimate yourself to the heat so that in the full-bore summer you are more heat tolerant.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat.
- Avoid drinks that contain caffeine, alcohol, and large amounts of sugar.

## **DO:**

- Become familiar with the symptoms of heat stress and how to treat them.
- Quickly move the victim to a cool, shady area.
- Remember to drink lots of water before, during, and after work to help reduce the potential for heat stress.

## **DON'T:**

- Forget to seek medical help when you first suspect a symptom of heat stress.
- If the victim has on contaminated clothing from spraying pesticides, don't touch their outer clothing without gloves.
- Leave a person alone who may have a heat-related illness.

**QUENCH YOUR THIRST  
WITH SAFETY FIRST!  
WORK SAFE TODAY  
HEAVEN CAN WAIT!!  
GET SMART - USE SAFETY FROM  
THE START!!!**