

PROPERTY & CASUALTY

Heat Resilience: Protecting Workers and Businesses Amid Rising Temperatures

Rising temperatures continue to be an alarming reality, with the heat of the summer months reaching new record-high temperatures. These temperature surges pose significant risks to both workers and businesses, making it essential to adapt to avoid heat-related illness or business interruption.



Protecting Your Employees

Heat stress can lead to serious ailments such as heat stroke and heat exhaustion, particularly for workers in outdoor vocations like construction and agriculture. Spending long days under the sun can quickly become dangerous without the proper precautions. Below are key measures to help protect your employees from heat-related illness:

- 1 Training and Education:** Properly educate supervisors and workers on recognizing the signs of heat-related illnesses and how to help prevent them.
- 2 Proper Supervision:** Make supervisors aware of the signs of heat-related illnesses and promote vigilance in monitoring workers for any symptoms. Be mindful of the increased risk of heat disorders among high-risk workers, taking any additional precautions.
- 3 Water, Rest and Shade:** Follow OSHA's three-word safety message for working in extreme heat by providing access to water, allowing for regular rest breaks and offering shaded areas for workers to cool down. These simple yet crucial measures can make a significant difference in preventing heat stress.
- 4 Gradual Acclimatization:** New workers and those returning after an absence should be gradually exposed to heat to build tolerance.
- 5 Emergency Preparedness:** Have comprehensive emergency response plans to address heat-related incidents. Early recognition and immediate intervention can help save lives.
- 6 Suitable Clothing and Equipment:** Provide appropriate personal protective equipment and breathable clothing to help prevent added heat stress.

Gradual Acclimatization

The [20 percent rule](#) is a useful guideline, allowing workers to acclimate to the heat and help minimize the risk to their health. To abide by this rule, new or returning workers should only work 20% of the normal duration of their first workday. Increase their work duration by 20% each day until the worker is back on the normal schedule.



Protecting Your Business

While safety remains the top priority, businesses should also consider the broader implications of rising temperatures and how that can affect operations. Extreme heat can lead to infrastructure damage, disruptions in supply chains and increased energy demands. To help protect their businesses, organizations should consider the following strategies:

- 1 Infrastructure Resilience:** Assess and reinforce buildings and equipment to withstand extreme heat and minimize potential damage.
- 2 Supply Chain Diversification:** Diversify supply chains to help reduce reliance on regions vulnerable to extreme heat and weather disruptions.
- 3 Energy Management:** Implement energy-saving measures to help reduce energy demands during heat waves, minimizing the risk of power outages.
- 4 Crisis Management Plans:** Develop clear and concise business continuity and crisis management plans to respond effectively to heat-related incidents.

By incorporating heat resilience into organizational risk management, businesses can safeguard workers and bolster the long-term viability of their business in an increasingly challenging environment.

Sources: <https://www.osha.gov/heat>



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