

The "C-Change" Initiative:

1. Change behaviors.
2. Challenge ourselves to re-think how we work.
3. Certify the results on a daily basis.



Tool Box Talk

Week of August the 23, 2010

Heat Related Illness Awareness

This is the forth and final Tool Box Talk for the month of August. The goal is to raise our Heat Related Illness Awareness, and identify what measures we need to take to prevent overexposure to heat. This week we will be talking about are own personal risk factors.

It is difficult to predict just who will be affected by heat stress and when because individual susceptibility varies. However, there are certain physical conditions that can reduce the body's natural ability to withstand high temperatures.

- **Weight** - Workers who are overweight are less efficient at losing heat.
- **Poor physical condition** - Being physically fit aids in the ability to cope with the increased demands that heat places on your body.
- **Pervious heat illnesses** - Workers are more sensitive to heat if they have experienced a previous heat related illness.
- **Heart disease or high blood pressure** – In order to pump blood to the skin and cool the body, the heart rate increases. This can cause stress on the heart.
- **Age** – As the body ages, its sweat glands become less efficient. Workers over the age of 40 may therefore have trouble with a hot environment. Acclimatization to the heat and physical fitness can offset some age related problems.
- **Recent illness** – Workers with recent illnesses such as diarrhea, vomiting or fever have an increased risk of dehydration and heat stress, because their bodies have lost salt and water.
- **Alcohol consumption** – Alcohol consumption during the previous 24 hours can lead to dehydration and increased risk of heat stress.
- **Medication** – Certain drugs may cause heat intolerance by reducing sweating or increasing urination. People who work in a hot environment should consult their physician or pharmacist before taking medications.
- **Lack of acclimatization** - When exposed to the heat for a few days, the body will adapt and become more efficient in dealing with raised environmental temperatures. This process is called acclimatization. Acclimatization usually takes 6 to 7 days. Benefits include: Lower pulse rate and more stable blood pressure; More efficient sweating; Improved ability to maintain body temperatures. Acclimatization maybe lost in as little as three days away from work. People returning to work after a holiday, vacation, or a long weekend may want to take little more time getting used to the working temperatures, before going back to their normal work load.