



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY
EXPERIMENT STATION

MAFES DAWG TRACKS

For many agriculture workers, and those that support them, being outdoors and coping with extreme temperatures and weather are part of the job. Outdoor labor in these hot & humid Mississippi days can lead to ailments ranging from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

You cannot just provide workers with water and the problem is solved!

- ✓ Educate workers on the symptoms of heat stress, so they can recognize the signs of when action needs to be taken.
- ✓ Educate workers on how to stay hydrated.
- ✓ Provide shade or a cooler area to take periodic breaks. Adjust work schedules/task when possible.
- ✓ Employers and co-workers should keep a watchful eye on each other.

Heat exhaustion symptoms:

- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Excessive sweating
- Cool, pale, clammy skin
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Muscle cramps

Treatment:

- Get to a cool, air-conditioned place.
- Drink water if fully conscious.
- Take a cool shower.
- Use a cold compress.

Heatstroke symptoms:

- Throbbing headache
- No sweating
- Body temperature above 103° F
- Red, hot, dry skin
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Loss of consciousness

Treatment:

- Call 911.
- Take immediate action to cool the worker until help arrives.

Stay hydrated.

There is no set number for the proper amount of fluid to drink to stay hydrated. It is all individual to the person, and greatly depends on how much they normally sweat, their physical condition, acclimation to conditions, and amount of strenuous activity. Urine color is a good indicator - clear if hydrated & dark yellow if dehydrated. Loss of 2% or more of body weight after activity could mean you are dehydrated.

While water is excellent, if working at strenuous task and sweating for over an hour at a time, sports drinks or small snacks will help replace the needed electrolytes, sodium & carbohydrates needed to keep energy levels up. Have a cooler with you at all time with what you need in it.

Have shade & working smarter.

Consider using tailgate tents for shade, when possible, for stationary work in an outside area.

Adjust work schedules when possible – start earlier in the mornings and try to accomplish the most intensive effort tasks first. Try to avoid doing strenuous jobs from around noon until 3:30 during the hottest hours of the day.

Keep a watchful eye on each other.

Gradually increase workload and allow more frequent breaks for new workers or workers who have been away on vacation or out of the heat for several days.

Of 84 heat enforcement cases, OSHA found that 17 of the 23 workers who died were in their first three days on a job, including eight on their first day. A body needs time to acclimate to higher temps and other environmental changes. It usually takes 10 to 14 days of heat exposure with the work you are performing to reduce the risk for heat injury and become acclimated.

For more info contact:

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Sources:

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