

While many anticipate the arrival of summer and beautiful sunny days, extreme heat also accompanies the summer months. Extreme heat isn't a friend of workers who is required to work outside in the elements. Parcel delivery drivers are required to work outside in all four seasons including the dreaded summer swelter.

Over 9,000 Americans have died from heat-related illnesses since 1979. Heat-related illnesses include heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and heat rash. Heatstroke is the most severe heat-related illness that often begins as heat exhaustion. Heat rash and heat cramps are accompanied by small blisters and muscle pain/spasms that can be controlled with ceasing physical activity and hydrating. Below are a few tips to remain hydrated and prevent heat-related illnesses from canceling your summer workday.

## Preventing Heat-Related Illnesses

- Stay hydrated by drinking fluids and avoiding caffeinated drinks such as coffee and soda.
- Do not wait until you are thirsty to drink fluids.
- Replace lost fluids with water and sports drinks (Ex: Gatorade).
- Avoid drinking alcohol.
- Eat light meals including nutritional meals such as fruits and vegetables.
- Wear sunscreen.

## Risk Factors for Heat-Related Illnesses

- **Acclimation:** Prior heat-related illnesses increase the likeliness of heat illness in the future. Additionally, employees who have worked inside with air conditioning will need additional time to acclimate to the summer heat.
- **Health Conditions:** Poor physical fitness.
- **Environment:** Working in direct sunlight or near hot engines.
- **Medications:** Over the counter and prescription medication can contribute to heat-related illness.

## Symptoms of Heat Stroke

- May begin with symptoms of heat exhaustion.
- A body temperature of 104 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
- Hot, dry skin.
- Slurred speech.
- Loss of consciousness.

## Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion

- Nausea, vomiting, dizziness and/or fainting.
- Weak, rapid pulse.
- Muscle cramps.
- Heavy sweating.

## What to Do

- Notify management and call 911 (if warranted).
- Move to a cool shaded area (if possible).
- Use cool wet rags to lower the body temperature

## Points to Remember

- Acclimation is critical.
- Hydration is critical.
- Be aware of personal risk factors.