HEAT ILLNESS PREVENTION

When employees work in hot conditions, special precautions must be taken to prevent heat illnesses. During the summer of 2005, California experienced a heat wave that took the lives of several workers. As a result of these tragedies, the Cal/OSHA Standards Board unanimously voted to initiate the emergency heat illness proposal that has now become part of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 8, Section 3395.

This bulletin will discuss the key elements Cal/OSHA will consider when enforcing this regulation. Take a moment to review these items so that you can take the necessary steps to comply with this regulation and reduce the risk of heat related illnesses.

HEAT ILLNESS ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION

1. The heat illness standard applies to all outdoor places of employment at those times when the environmental risk factors for heat illness are present. Structures that are hotter than the outside environment, such as sheds, storage bins or tents will also be considered as an outdoor place of employment.

2. There must be an adequate supply of clean, cool, potable water. Employees who are working in the heat need to drink 3 to 4 glasses of water per hour in order to replace the water lost to sweat. For an eight-hour day this means employers must provide two or more gallons per person.

3. Shade must be accessible at all times to employees suffering from heat illness or to those who believe a preventative recovery period is needed.

   Preventative Recovery period means a period of time in which an employee can recover from the heat in order to prevent heat illness.

   Note: The shaded area must allow the employee to assume a comfortable posture and must not cause exposure to another hazard. The shaded area must also be open to the air or provide ventilation or cooling (AC) for a period of no less than five minutes.

4. Develop effective procedures for controlling environmental risk factors. When scheduling work in hot environments, take into consideration the work severity and duration, the amount of exposure to direct sunlight, the types of clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE) being used.
5. Train employees on the personal risk factors that may make them vulnerable to heat related illnesses. Inform employees that age, health, water consumption, alcohol consumption, caffeine consumption and prescription medication all affect the body’s ability to retain water.

Acclimatization Training is part of the personal risk factors that Cal/OSHA will evaluate. Employers are required to develop procedures to aid employees in becoming adjusted to working in the heat. For example, during very hot conditions, gradually increase the work time employees are exposed per day.

6. Recognize the symptoms of heat illness and providing an effective response is also required training. Supervisors and employees must be trained on recognizing the common early symptoms and signs of heat related illnesses. They must also be trained on reporting and responding to these emergencies. Procedures for calling emergency medical services and giving precise worksite directions must be included in this training.

Note: Regardless of the worker’s protests, no employee with any symptoms of possible serious heat illness shall be sent home or left unattended without medical assessment and authorization.

7. Cal/OSHA will review the effectiveness of the training program. Supervisory and non-supervisory employees will be interviewed regarding heat illness training to determine whether they have received it and exhibit sufficient understanding of the content.

For more information on the regulation go to:  
https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/heatillnessinfo.html

For a template to use when developing a written program go to:  
http://per.lacity.org/safety/Safety_HeatIllness.htm

If you have any questions or concerns contact City Safety Engineer, Allan Tan at 213-473-6981.