

Addendum to Sound Native Plants Accident Prevention Program
Outdoor Heat Exposure
(May – September*)

Purpose: To help prevent heat-related illnesses and injuries.

Which workers does this program cover?

Anyone working outdoors more than 15 minutes in any 60-minute period in temperatures:

- As low as 52°F when wearing clothing that is non-breathable or provides a vapor barrier like rain gear, chemical resistant suits, or Level A suits
- Starting at 77°F when wearing double layer woven clothing like sweatshirts, coveralls, and jackets on top of other clothes
- At 89°F when wearing any other type of clothing like typical shirts and pants

Some individuals are more susceptible to heat stress than others. For example, individuals who aren't acclimatized or who come to work dehydrated.

Workers doing the following jobs or tasks at our worksites are considered to meet the descriptions above:

- 1) All installation crew members and supervisors
- 2) All nursery crew members and supervisors

Prevention measures

Workers and supervisors share responsibility for safety at the jobsite. This includes watching out for yourself and others because heat illness can become a life-threatening condition quickly if unnoticed or ignored. Speak up if you notice anything that could be unsafe or result in someone getting hurt or sick.

Start the day safe, do the work safe and go home safe.

1. Setting up the worksite for shade

During times with potential heat stress, we are required to provide shade for our employees. Crew supervisors have 4 options for providing shade:

- 1) Identify and utilize existing accessible shade. In rural field sites, this may include natural shade, such as from trees, and in urban areas this may include buildings.
- 2) Set up portable canopies for shade.
- 3) Utilize air conditioning for cooling off employees, which may include air conditioned buildings or air conditioned truck cabs.

*This hazard can occur at other times during the year. If so, we will apply all necessary safety measures to prevent heat-related illnesses and injuries.

- 4) Call off work or move to a work site with shade. If there is no other option available, work must be called off.

2. Work scheduling to reduce heat exposure

When temperatures exceed 89 degrees, work schedules may be altered if possible to avoid working in the hottest part of the day, which in our region is roughly 2:00 – 6:30 pm in the summer. Work schedule alteration may include starting and ending earlier, or simply shortening the work day. Some of our contracts have work hour stipulations, so be sure to check with a field manager before scheduling early start times.

3. Hydration

Don't wait to be thirsty to drink water, and don't drink it all at once. In fact, it's best to start drinking water before work. Drink small amounts often throughout the day to stay hydrated. Additional water breaks are allowed during hot days.

Drink at least 1 cup every 15-20 minutes

Sport drinks low in sugar are okay. Avoid drinks with caffeine and high sugar content like sodas because they won't hydrate you. Crew supervisors should provide enough water to allow each employee to drink at least a quart of water each hour, by providing water coolers on each truck and checking them frequently to make sure they don't run out.

4. Adjusting to heat (acclimatization)

It takes about two weeks to fully adjust to hot working conditions. This adjustment is lost if you are away from the hot conditions for a week or more. Acclimatization is especially critical for heavy work in hot temperatures. Supervisors should check with new employees to determine whether they are acclimatized to heat before starting work during heat stress conditions. New employees who are not acclimatized should be eased in to a full work schedule over a period of at least one week.

5. Training

Each year before May, employees working on the jobs listed above will be provided with safety training on outdoor heat exposure, the steps we take to protect them, and actions they must follow to prevent heat-related illness. Additional training will be scheduled and provided for those that missed the session or when a new employee is hired.

Employees need to be aware of:

- How heat can make them sick and how to recognize the common signs and symptoms of heat-related illness in themselves and coworkers. Four most common conditions are heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

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- The environmental factors that increase risk for heat-related illness: higher temperatures, humidity, sunlight (working under direct sunlight makes it feel about 15 degrees hotter), additional sources of heat like powered equipment, asphalt, no wind, level of physical activity, and wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE) or layers of clothing.
- Personal factors that may increase susceptibility to heat-related illness: age, not being acclimatized, having medical conditions such as hormonal and heart issues and diabetes, dehydration, and use of substances that can affect the body's response to heat like drugs, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and medications.
- The importance of removing heat-retaining PPE such as non-breathable chemical resistant clothing during all breaks to allow their body to cool down.
- How to stay well hydrated by drinking small quantities of water or other acceptable beverages frequently throughout the day.
- The importance of acclimatization (to get used to the conditions). It takes about 5 days to start and two weeks to be fully acclimated.
- How to immediately report signs or symptoms of heat-related illness they experience or observe in coworkers, and how to **immediately** respond to prevent the situation from becoming a medical emergency. How to identify and what to do during a heat-related medical emergency (e.g., potential heat stroke).

Supervisors need to know the following (in addition to what is detailed for employees above):

- The procedures to follow to implement the heat-related illness prevention plan including the acclimatization schedule, how to keep track of environmental conditions throughout the day, when to increase the number of breaks or stop work early, to check that workers are accessing shade and water (especially for mobile operations), encourage them to stay hydrated, and communicate with lone workers to ensure they are safe.
- When to provide personal protective equipment like cooling vests and gel-filled bandanas.
- What the supervisor needs to do if an employee shows signs and symptoms of possible heat-related illness including appropriate emergency response procedures including how to transport any affected employees to a medical service provider.

6. Responding to reports or observations of heat-related illness.

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Let a supervisor or someone nearby know if you or a co-worker is experiencing any signs or symptoms of heat-related illness and take immediate action to ensure things don't get dangerously worse.

1. Time is critical. Get the worker away from the hot area into a cool shaded area. Quick action increases the chances for a full recovery.
2. Let the worker rest and drink cool water. Remove excess clothing and PPE. Utilize ice packs, air conditioning or other available cooling resources.
3. Never leave an employee who is experiencing heat-related problems alone, things could get worse.
4. If the employee does not respond quickly, call emergency medical services.

If the employee receives medical attention get a written authorization from the provider that the worker can get back to work and written documentation of any restriction or limitations.

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