



Ironworkers...*On the Safe Side*

Safety and Health Bulletin Dedicated to Servicing Our District Councils, Local Unions and IMPACT Contractors Throughout North America

*For Immediate Release
Washington, D.C.
July 8, 2019*

*Contact: Steve Rank
Executive Director
(847) 795-1710*

The Heat's on – Avoiding Heat Stress and Illness

“**Heat Illness**” is one of the “**Deadly Dozen Hazards**” our members face in the workplace and is part of the International Association’s **2019 ZERO Incidents** campaign. Machinery, engines and tools can easily overheat and we must be aware that humans can overheat too. Each year, members experience symptoms of heat stress in the workplace on different levels and for a variety of reasons. Heat illness can be deadly and affect members at any age. Thousands of workers in the construction industry become sick from exposure to heat, and some even die. Heat illnesses and deaths are preventable.

Who is affected by heat illness?

Any worker exposed to hot and humid conditions is at risk of heat illness, especially those responsible for heavy work that many ironworkers perform daily. Some workers might be at greater risk than others if they have not built up a tolerance to hot conditions, including new workers, temporary workers, or those returning to work after a week or more off. Other factors such as alcohol consumption the night before can be a contributing factor to dehydration that could result in heat stress or illness. Ironworkers can also face many heat waves throughout year that creates more exposure to conditions resulting in more cases of heat related illnesses.

What is heat illness and how does it happen?

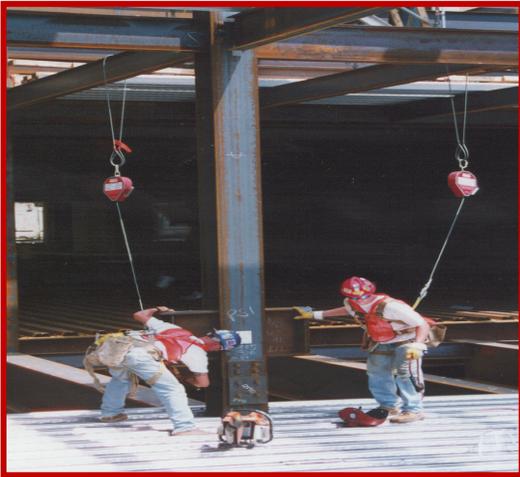
The body normally cools itself naturally by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise quickly to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken such as drinking water frequently and having access to shade or air conditioning. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Muscle cramping might be the first sign of heat-related illness, and may lead to heat exhaustion or stroke.



Heat stroke requires immediate medical attention and can result in death.

Following are some common signs and symptoms of heat stress.

- **Heavy sweating**
- **Weakness**
- **Cold, pale, and clammy skin**
- **Fast, weak pulse**
- **Nausea or vomiting**
- **Fainting**



temperature (above 103°F)*

The activity of decking installation can be dangerous due to the reflection of sun and heat from the metal decking. This is only one of many common work activities ironworkers perform that can produce much high temperature conditions that must be recognized. The carrying and installation of rebar on decks and walls in hot and humid conditions is another common activity that can lead to heat stress and illness.

Following are common symptoms of heat stroke that could be deadly:

- High body
- Hot, red, dry or moist skin
- Rapid and strong pulse
- Unconsciousness

How can heat illness be prevented?

Employers should establish a comprehensive heat illness prevention program. They should provide workers with water and shade, gradually increase workloads and allow more frequent breaks for new workers or workers who have been away for a week or more to build tolerance for working in the heat (acclimatization), modify work schedules as necessary, plan for emergencies and educate workers about symptoms of heat-related illnesses and prevention, and monitor workers for signs of illness. Workers new to the heat or those that have been away from work can be vulnerable to heat stress and they must be acclimatized. Following are some ways to help prevent heat related illness and fatalities:

- Drink water every 15 minutes
- Move to a cooler location and rest in the shade
- Apply cool, wet clothes to the body as much as possible
- Lie down and loosen clothing
- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing
- Learn the signs of heat illness and what to do in an emergency
- Keep an eye on fellow Ironworkers
- Take it easy on your first days of work in the heat to get used to it.

What should you do if you see a member with heat illness symptoms?

- Call 911 immediately — when there's a medical emergency
- Move the person to a cooler environment
- Reduce the person's body temperature with cool cloths or pour water on them
- Do NOT give fluids

We must make every effort to protect our members from heat illness, one of the **“Deadly Dozen Hazards”** that are part of the International Association’s **“2019 ZERO Incident”** campaign. Please contact Steve Rank, IW Executive Director of Safety & Health in the Safety and Health Department at (847) 795-1710, Jeff Norris, Canadian Safety Coordinator at (780) 459-4498, or Vicki O’Leary, General Organizer for Safety/Diversity at (202) 702-7828, if you have any questions pertaining workplace safety and health issues or questions.

Steve Rank
Executive Director of Safety and Health
Iron Workers International

