

# Varying Degrees Of Safety

## A SAFETY TALK FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

## DURING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

From the beginning of time man has had to adapt to changing environments--from working in the cold to working in hot, humid surroundings. Because of these changing conditions, we have developed our own regulating system to handle temperature extremes.

This regulating system is made up of two parts: one, the core system that contains the internal organs such as the brain, the heart and lungs; and two, the shell, which is basically the muscles, fat and skin surface.

For us to remain healthy and able to work efficiently, we must keep our body core temperature as close as possible to 98.6°F. It has been reported that if our body temperature falls below 95°F we will suffer what is known as hypothermia and if it reaches 80.6°F we will freeze to death. If our body core temperature goes the other way and exceeds 105°F and we do not sweat, we will then go into what is known as hyperthermia and suffer heat stress.

Heat stress is the greater concern to us at this time of year. In cold weather we can always put on additional clothing, but this is not the case in hot weather. The blood plays a vital role in maintaining the correct body temperature because it carries the heat from deep inside the body to our outer shell--the skin--where the heat is then dissipated by evaporation. Hot environments place an additional load on the cardiovascular system; so special precautions need to be taken when first working, or for that matter playing, in hot environments, or heat stress may indeed set in.

We are very fortunate to have a self-regulating system that protects us from extreme temperatures. However, if the process in which the blood carries the heat from deep inside our body to the outer skin malfunctions, we still can be affected by heat stress.

**There are three major heat stress disorders:**

- *Heatstroke*--occurs when there is a failure in our regulating process or there is an imbalance in heat gain and heat loss of the body.
- *Heat Exhaustion*--occurs as a result of the depletion of body water.
- *Heat Cramps*--are a result of a loss of salt in our system.

**Frequent symptoms of heatstroke include:**

- Hot, dry skin
- Mental confusion

- Visual disturbances
- Loss of consciousness
- High body temperature

Heatstroke can be brought on by sustained hard work in a hot environment when an individual has not been properly acclimated to the hot conditions.

In addition, heatstroke can occur due to obesity and lack of physical fitness, a recent intake of alcohol or dehydration coupled with working in a hot environment.

Heat exhaustion, on the other hand, is less severe than heatstroke. The general symptoms of heat exhaustion are fatigue, nausea, headache, clammy and moist skin and a rapid pulse.

Basically, heat exhaustion is caused by a failure to replace water and/or salt that has been lost in the sweating process.

Heat cramps, the third major disorder of heat stress, are identified by painful muscle spasms of the arms, legs and the abdominal area during or after hard, vigorous work.

**Certain people may be more prone to heat stress disorders if they:**

- Have had inadequate sleep; been drinking alcohol or have high blood pressure. In addition, people who are not acclimated or used to hard physical labor in their work environment and who are obese and "out of shape" may be likely candidates for heat stress.
- The likelihood of having heat stress can be reduced if you pace yourself when exposed to high temperatures--whether it be at work or participating in athletic events, for example. Also, additional fluids should be consumed to assist the normal body process of sweating.
- When you take your breaks, take them in areas cooler than your work stations. Wear appropriate clothing for the job conditions.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing in high-temperature, humid areas as long as you are not working around rotating equipment. When working around red-hot metal or furnaces, wear special reflective protective equipment and try to keep skin exposure to the minimum.
- As mentioned earlier, you must pace yourself when first working in hot weather so the regulating system can work properly. By knowing the basic symptoms of heat stress and following some of the simple

rules for prevention, you can greatly reduce the chance of developing heat stress.