

Toolbox Talks 2

059: Unsafe Acts: Hot Weather

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Review any policies your company has in regard to hot weather safety.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Most injuries occur not due to unsafe conditions, but due to unsafe acts. This Safety Talk addresses unsafe acts related to hot weather.

Discussion notes:

Some hot weather facts to think about

- Not all injuries related to hot weather involve heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- People are more prone to accidents in hot weather, due to such factors as dehydration, irritability, and fatigue.
- The intense sunlight associated with hot summer weather provides three additional hazards: temporary sun blindness, permanent sun damage to the eyes, and melanoma (skin cancer) from overexposure of the skin.

Cautions

- Protect your eyes from sun damage by wearing safety glasses that are specifically designed for use in high sunlight conditions. They provide UV protection.
- You can be dangerously dehydrated long before you feel thirsty.

Unsafe acts in hot weather

- Wearing amber lensed safety glasses in daylight. These lenses are designed for low light levels. They filter out the wavelengths of light that cause your pupils to contract, thereby increasing the sensitivity to light. In poor lighting conditions, this enhances safety. In bright sunlight, this isn't good.
- Waiting until you're thirsty to drink water. Thirst runs late. Dehydration can make you dizzy or inattentive. Drink water at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Consuming normal amounts of coffee, tea, or sodas in hot weather. Coffee and tea cause the body to reduce the water in blood and tissue. Soda is high in sodium, causing water loss. Cut back on these beverages in hot weather.
- Ignoring the hot weather safety alerts. In extremely hot weather, the weather service puts out hot weather safety alerts. If you need to work under these conditions, do so with caution. Work out a safety procedure with your foreman, if your company doesn't already have one. Don't rely on how you feel to alert you to problems.
- Working in direct sunlight. Sometimes, this can't be avoided. But it does present several risks. Where possible, shade the area of work. This will reduce eye strain, melanoma risk, and heat exposure.
- Rushing a job to get out of the heat. Don't try to work at a faster pace when your alertness is already less than normal.
- Entering a building without allowing eyes to adjust. Even with the proper glasses, your pupils may contract so much that you are blind when you first come in from the sunlight. Waiting a few seconds for your eyes to adjust will allow you to see potential hazards. This can prevent you from slipping, tripping, or walking into things.

Review and discussion

1. What are some injuries that occur due to hot weather or are more likely to occur in hot weather? *[Note to Presenter: Impaired judgment and reduced attention spans occur due to dehydration and/or fatigue from heat. So, all injuries are more likely. The temporary blindness that occurs when going from intense sunlight to indoors also is a factor. Heat stroke and heat exhaustion are classic hot weather medical problems.]*
2. What are some factors that make people more prone to accidents in hot weather?
3. Name three sunlight hazards.
4. How can you protect your eyes from sun damage?
5. Should you rely on thirst to let you know if you're dehydrated?
6. What are some things you can do to reduce dehydration or maintain proper hydration?
7. If there's a hot weather safety alert in effect, how should you proceed with outdoor work? *[Note to Presenter: The answer depends on your company policies.]*
8. What are some problems with working in direct sunlight? What can you do about these?
9. Why is working faster to get out of the heat a bad idea?
10. What problem is likely when you come in from the bright sunlight, and what should you do?

Participant's Signature and Date

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