

Toolbox Talks 2

092: Unsafe Conditions: 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:

This Safety Talk addresses unsafe conditions in hot weather.

Discussion notes:

Background

Hot weather itself is an unsafe condition. The dehydration and fatigue from the heat can cloud thinking and cause poor judgment. As with other unsafe conditions, you can work safely if you take the right precautions.

Unsafe conditions involving hot weather

- Potable water not readily available. Bring your own water. Bottled water is expensive and a thermos simply can't hold enough. This is why many firms supply crews with a large water container that has a tap or faucet. Cans of soda are not a solution. Soda is high in sodium, which dehydrates you.
- Coffee pot in use. Because coffee and tea are diuretics, drinking them in hot weather accelerates dehydration. You need to drink an additional cup of water for every cup of coffee or tea you drink. With sodas, the ratio is much higher.
- Coworker disoriented. You may feel fine. You took all the necessary precautions. For example, you've been drinking plenty of water. But your coworker, dehydrated from soft drinks, is inattentive and irritable. If you can get your coworker to drink water and get out of the heat for a bit, you may get things back on track. If you do nothing, your coworker will remain at high risk for heat stroke. You personally will be in danger because of that person's impaired judgment.
- Excess sunlight. Sunburn is no minor injury. Each bout of sunburn ratchets up your risk of skin cancer considerably. Excess sun exposure, whether you get a burn or not, ages your skin. It'll make you look old before your time. Unprotected eyes are at high risk for eye cancer, which is both debilitating and disfiguring. Wear the appropriate PPE. This includes sunscreen, your hardhat, and UV-rated sunglasses. If you can provide a shading means, such as a canopy, do so.
- Perspiration on hands. Your body cools itself by perspiring. But that moisture can make your hands slippery and increase the likelihood you'll drop things or slip when using a tool. Gymnasts and climbers use chalk to keep their hands dry. You probably don't want to carry chalk around, and there are reasons not to use it on the job. But you can hang a dry cloth, such as a shop rag, on your belt. Simply wipe your hands on it before you go to grip something.
- People in a hurry. When it's insanely hot outside, people tend to move quickly between buildings and from vehicles to buildings. Their focus is on getting out of the heat, so their awareness level is down. Move yours up a notch to account for this.
- Weather alert in effect. Don't ignore these alerts. Discuss the condition with your foreman, and take the necessary precautions. Those may include crew rotation or a reduced schedule.

Review and discussion

1. What are some dangers that hot weather brings? *[Note to Presenter: There*

2. What should you do if there's no drinking water available on the site?
3. Why should you not drink coffee or tea during exceptionally hot weather?
4. What is the particular problem with soda consumption during hot weather?
5. Does your coworker's condition affect your safety? In what way is your coworker's disorientation a safety problem for you?
6. What should you do if your coworker seems to be suffering from heat and dehydration?
7. What are some problems with excess sunlight, and how do you protect yourself?
8. Sweaty hands increase the risk of dropping things and of slipping when turning a wrench. What's an easy way to prevent these problems?
9. What happens to the alertness of other people during high heat conditions? What should you do in response?
10. What should you do if a hot weather alert is in effect? *[Note to Presenter: This is a good time to discuss company policy on the matter. With construction, weather is often an issue. A construction contract may allow only 3 days, or whatever, for inclement weather. With a limited number of days for that purpose, you have to be very careful about using any of them. So, it's likely you'll continue to work right through a hot weather alert. This will require some planning and adjustment. How does your company handle such things?]*

Participant's Signature and Date

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