**Heat Injury and Illness Prevention**

In 2014 alone, 2,630 workers suffered from heat illness and 18 died from heat stroke and related causes on the job. 56% of the incidents occurred in the services providing industries. The Waste and Recycling industry falls into this sector and is classified as one of OSHA’s “High Hazard Industries”. [Click here](#). Waste and Recycling workers working in hot weather are at risk. Employees must be made aware of the risk. Employers must acclimatize workers, provide safe working conditions, and assure that workers go home to their families as healthy as they came to work.

*As we transition into summer, caring for employees exposed to risk of heat injury and illness is critical.*

The human body prefers to work at the core temperature of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. When bodies get too hot, they cool themselves off by perspiring, or sweating, which opens our pores, releases heat from our bodies and cools the skin through evaporation. Heat stress is when the body cannot maintain a safe temperature. The best protection from Heat Stress is prevention. Below we review risk factors, types of heat stress and heat stress prevention measures.

**The higher the Heat index the higher the risk. Other risk factors include:**

- Dehydration – Stay hydrated to provide your body the sweat it needs to cool itself
- Illness/fever – If your body is already hot, it has that much more work to do to stay cool
- Age – Children under 4 years old and adults over 65 are at a higher risk
- Obesity or lower fitness level increases risk
- Certain medications – Allergy, cough, cold, blood pressure, irritable bladder/bowel, thyroid, laxative/diuretic medicines are examples of medicines that can increase the risk of heat stress
- High humidity – Reduces the ability of perspiration to evaporate and cool the skin

**Examples of Heat Stress Illnesses include:**

- Heat rash
- Sunburn
- Heat cramps
- Fainting
- Heat exhaustion
- Heat stroke

During normal activity the average person looses 2-3 quarts of water per day. During warm weather or heavy activity that increases to 2-3 quarts per hour. During summer, drivers & helpers experience heavy activity and warm weather.

**Heat Stress Prevention Measures**

- Stay hydrated
- Drink before becoming thirsty
- Avoid drinks with too much sugar or caffeine
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothes
- Wear a hat with wide brim
- Wear UV-protective sunglasses/safety glasses
- Work in the shade when possible
- Slowly acclimate to hot weather
- Take plenty of short breaks
- Eat smaller meal portions
- Watch for signs of heat stress

**Employers have a responsibility to help front-line employees prevent heat stress by providing the following:**

- Hydration (water, electrolytes)
- Adjust work procedures, as necessary
- Help employees acclimatize
- Provide shade structures where possible
- Observe personnel for signs of heat stress
- Implement a “buddy system”
- Provide proper PPE
- Provide training to make sure everyone is aware of the seriousness of heat-related hazards

For more tips and to monitor heat index at your location on your own phone feel free to use an app like the ones linked below in the QR codes
Heat Stress can be fatal and is the number one weather-related killer in the U.S.