

Heads Up!

March 21, 2013

DOSH Issues First Heat Advisory

As winter fades into spring and California temperatures rise, California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health warns employers about rising temperatures and launches a new heat illness prevention campaign.

The importance of drinking smaller amounts of water more frequently appears to be the focus of this year's Cal/OSHA heat illness campaign, with the slogan, "Stopping for Water Keeps You Going."



DOSH's new heat illness campaign urges workers to drink water frequently.

The DOSH heat illness message keeps going, as it has for the past several years. Over the March 15-17 weekend, the Division reminded employers to protect outdoor workers as temperatures climbed into the 80s in the Central Valley and parts of Southern California.

For several years, DOSH has pressed the message that "Water, Rest, Shade" are key to preventing heat illness. Cal/OSHA also stresses that training for workers and supervisors on the signs and symptoms of heat illness and ensuring emergency response procedures are in place are key to protecting outdoor workers.

As winter ends, acclimation to hotter conditions also is an important facet of preventing heat illness and death. Acclimation played a role in two of the three confirmed heat illness fatalities in 2012, both in construction.

Cal/OSHA's heat illness regulation, General Industry Safety Orders §3395, requires employers to take a number of steps to protect outdoor workers, including:

- Training all employees and supervisor about heat illness prevention.
- Providing plenty of cool, fresh water and encouraging workers to drink frequently.
- Providing a shaded area for workers to take a "cool down" recovery break.
- Ensuring workers are given time to acclimate to the heat, especially for new workers "and always during a sudden heat wave."
- Preparing an emergency heat illness prevention plan.

Employers also are required to have in place "high heat" procedures when temperatures reach 95°F. They include:

- Observing workers for the signs and symptoms of heat illness.
- Reminding workers to drink water frequently.
- Providing close supervision to workers in their first two weeks of employment.
- Having effective communications systems in place to summon emergency assistance when necessary.