

# Illinois Department of Labor Warns of Health Hazards from Heat

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**SPRINGFIELD** – As Illinois begins to experience higher temperatures, the Illinois Department of Labor is warning workers to pay attention to heat and humidity, which can be deadly.

“As more Illinoisans return to work following the COVID-19 pandemic, people who work outside need to consider another hazard: intense heat. Exposure to high temperatures and humidity can cause sickness and death if not taken seriously. Both

employers and employees have a responsibility to understand the dangers,” said **Illinois Department of Labor Director Michael Kleinik**.

Thousands of construction workers are exposed to the elements everyday while upgrading roads, bridges and other necessary infrastructure. To prevent serious injury and death the Illinois Department of Labor and OSHA stress “Water. Rest. Shade.”

The symptoms of prolonged exposure to dangerous heat need to be recognized. The warning signs of a heat-related illness, such as heat stroke, include:

- Heavy sweating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Weak pulse
- High body temperature (103°F or higher)

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related ailment that can lead to death if the warning signs aren’t caught. If a worker appears to be suffering heat stroke, it should be treated as an emergency and 911 should be called. The victim should be taken to a cooler, shady place and be given a cold compress, if possible.

Some people – including those over 65; overweight; and those with underlying conditions, including heart disease and diabetes – are most susceptible to heat-related illnesses. Consuming alcohol or medication can also impact body-temperature regulation, which increases the danger.

Employees should be trained to recognize heat-related illness and how to respond in an emergency. It is critical cool water is not only available to workers, but they are encouraged to stay hydrated. Employees should also be encouraged to protect themselves from the sun if working long hours outdoors.

For the past 10 years, the federal Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) has waged a campaign to combat heat-related illness among workers. OSHA’s training materials provide a simple and effective three-word strategy that can save lives -- Water. Rest. Shade. <https://www.osha.gov/heat/>

For more information on Illinois OSHA, a division of IDOL, visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/idol/Laws-Rules/safety/Pages/default.aspx>.