



SafetyFirst Network



KNOW YOUR WHS RIGHTS

WORKING IN HEAT

Working in heat – indoors or outdoors – can cause serious harm if the body struggles to stay cool. Without proper controls, workers may experience heat stress, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Your employer must eliminate or minimise heat-related risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

WHAT IS HEAT FATIGUE/ ILLNESS?

Common symptoms of heat fatigue and heat illness include: dehydration, dizziness, heatstroke, heat cramps, irritability, heat rash, fainting, tiredness or weakness, headaches, migraines and nausea.

You have the right to a safe workplace.

If you experience these symptoms or see them in others, speak up and report any incident through your WHS incident and hazard reporting system.

Is your workplace safe during heat?

Workers continue to face increased risks from:

- Extreme temperatures
- Extreme humidity
- Heatwaves
- Bushfires and smoke
- Drought conditions

Climate change is intensifying these hazards. Extreme heat and heat illness are serious risks, and no worker should be expected to put their life at risk due to unsafe conditions.

If you reasonably believe that working in heat presents a serious and immediate risk to your health or safety, you have the right to stop or refuse unsafe work until controls are in place.

This right exists under WHS law; there is no specific "stop-work temperature".

UNDERSTANDING HEAT STRESS

There is no official workplace exposure standard or safe/unsafe limit for heat stress. Heat indexes and temperature readings are guides only, because heat strain depends on many variables.

When identifying heat-related risks, consider three main factor groups:

Environmental	Work process	Individual
Ambient temperature Humidity Radiant heat Wind speed	Type and intensity Duration and timing PPE / clothing	Acclimatisation Hydration Fitness & health Fatigue Medications Age

Workers should be actively involved in identifying heat hazards and solutions. Previous heat-related incidents or complaints should be reviewed and considered as part of a risk assessment.

Your employer should have clear procedures and systems in place for high heat work – for ongoing work in heat and when there are extreme weather events impacting temperatures.

Once risks are identified, your employer must assess the risk, implement controls, and review them regularly.



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To ensure compliance with WHS obligations, Safe Work Australia recommends employers:

- Conduct heat-related hazard and risk assessments
- Monitor weather conditions (including BOM alerts)
- Provide heat-illness checklists and first-aid guidance
- Modify workloads, tasks or work hours during high-heat periods
- Rotate workers or provide shaded/cool rest areas ensure adequate drinking water is always available

Monitoring tools may include:

- Thermometers
- Psychrometers (to measure wet-bulb temperature)

Heat discomfort is felt at 30 degrees celsius and all efforts should be taken by employers to monitor and keep temperatures below this level or to provide conditions for outdoor workers that help reduce the effects of seasonal hot conditions where the temperature exceeds 30 degrees.

Both indoor and outdoor work measures to be taken should include:

- Avoiding work in areas where workers are exposed to heat
- Providing air-conditioned rest rooms
- Changing the rate of work e.g. taking longer
- Changing the timing of the work to be performed, eg to a cooler part of the day
- Providing lighter alternative work
- Use of air-circulating fans
- Use of shade cloths
- Use of trees to shade buildings and outdoor areas
- Provision of constant supplies of cool drinking water

When work cannot be re-scheduled or artificial cooling provided then a regime of rest breaks in cool areas with cool drinks is essential.

HEAT CAN SERIOUSLY IMPACT YOUR HEALTH

You are entitled to a safe workplace, proper controls, and the ability to speak up if conditions become unsafe.

I'M AN ELECTED HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE (HSR) WITH SAFETY CONCERNS IN THE WORKPLACE, WHAT CAN I DO TO REPRESENT MY WORKGROUP?

HSR's hold powers and functions under section 68 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 which includes the ability to:

- Represent workers in the workgroup on matters relating to WHS
- Monitor measures taken by your employer (or their representative)
- Investigate WHS complaints from workers
- Make enquiries into anything that appears to be a risk to health and safety of workers.

WE ARE UNION - WE ARE ALWAYS HERE FOR YOU

CPSU members have access to a range of supporting materials and guidance to assist in representing members' concerns.

If you are a Health and Safety Representative (HSR) and would like expert advice and assistance regarding workplace safety issues, you are entitled to seek the assistance of any person, including the CPSU.

If you have concerns about any safety matters in your workplace, and would like assistance or advice, you can always speak to your organiser or email the CPSU WHS team at SafetyFirst@cpsu.org.au.

CAN I BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED FOR RAISING A CONCERN?

All workers hold duties under the Work Health and Safety Act, which includes taking care for their own health and safety.

If you think your employer has not taken all reasonably practicable steps to mitigate risk to your health and safety at work, speak up and raise those concerns. Your employer must not take adverse action against you for doing so – it's unlawful.

When you are a CPSU member, you're never alone when it comes to health and safety at work.



This information was produced by CPSU and paid for by union members. Every member contributes to the resources, strength & capacity of our union. Scan the QR to join now.



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