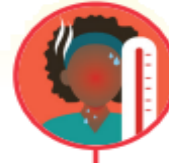


# Summer Heat Tips for Outdoor Worker Safety

Fraser Health advises workers to be extra cautious in the heat



## Signs of Heat Exhaustion

- Skin Rash
- Heavy Sweating
- Feel Dizzy
- Feel Sick or Throw Up
- Rapid Breathing and Heartbeat
- Headache
- Trouble Concentrating
- Muscle Cramps
- Extreme Thirst
- Dark Urine and Urinate Less

## Signs of Heat Stroke

- High Body Temperature
- Drowsy or Fainting
- Confused
- Less Coordinated
- Very Hot and Red Skin

## How can extreme heat affect my health?

Extreme heat can affect your health in a number of ways. It can cause heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. It can worsen existing medical conditions. In extreme situations, it can result in permanent disability or death.

## Why am I more likely to be affected?

Outdoor workers are more susceptible to heat illness than other people because they maybe more exposed to the elements with little shade. Seasons can also go from cool to hot very quickly in the Lower Mainland, which can make it hard to get acclimatized, especially in the beginning of the hotter weather. This contributes to the risk.

### Did you know?

WorkSafe BC had 115 claims from workers related to heat stress in 2021 – a 180% increase over the average in the previous 4 years.

Workers are more likely to be at risk if they:

- Have a pre-existing health condition

- Are not acclimatized to the summer heat. **Workers from hot countries are also vulnerable to heat.** BC has higher peak temperatures and more variation in temperatures than places such as Jamaica and Mexico.
- Taking certain medications, such as some for heart conditions, mental health conditions, allergies, or diuretics. See Health Authority websites for details.

## What can I do to stay safe?

### Before the heat season

- Make sure that your worksite has a heat emergency plan and that employees are familiar with it.
- Educate yourself and others about the signs and symptoms of heat stress and heat stroke (above), as well as what to do.
- Develop a buddy system so workers can monitor each other – alertness can decrease with heat, so some people may not know they are experiencing stress.

### During extreme heat

- Stay up-to-date - weather can change quickly.
  - Tune in to local weather forecasts and alerts.
  - Use a weather app like WeatherCAN.

- Post information about extreme heat risks in multiple languages in visible places around the worksite (available from Health Authority websites)
- Monitor yourself and others for signs of heat stress or heat stroke, even those you might think are acclimatized to heat.
- Take frequent breaks and reschedule tasks for earlier or later in the days if possible to avoid the hottest temperatures.
- Drink plenty of water, including bringing water bottles into fields, and remind others to take breaks and drink water.
- Monitor your accommodations – if temperatures are above 31 degrees in the day and do not drop significantly at night, it is not a safe place to rest.
- Use tubs of water for foot baths for cooling – this may lower core temperatures.

### When would you consider stopping work in the heat?

A worker should stop if they have symptoms of heat illness. A high heart rate or high body temperature can also be a sign of heat stress. Talk to your employer about how to monitor your heat stress at work.

You need to spend a few hours in a cool place to lower your body temperature. When in a cool place only for a short time, you might feel cooler on the outside but your body has not yet cooled down on the inside. There is still a chance you could get a heat illness.

### Anytime someone shows signs of heat illness:

- Try to move the person to a cool place.
- Give them plenty of water.
- Cool the skin down with water or place the person in cool water.
- **If it looks like heat stroke, call 9-1-1**

If you start to feel unwell while working in hot environments, let your supervisor/employers know.

In BC, you have a legal right to stop work if you feel unsafe. You may not be disciplined or penalized. Your employer or supervisor may temporarily assign a new task to you, at no loss in pay.

### What would health authorities suggest employers do for your safety?

- Employers are required to have an extreme heat plan, including providing water, shade and appropriate rest/work cycles.
- Employers need to monitor the level of stress caused by all sources of heat, humidity, work, and clothing.
- If an employer or worker has concerns, they can call the prevention information line to request an officer to visit the worksite to help assess for heat stress: **Phone:** 604.276.3100 (Lower Mainland) **Toll-free:** 1.888.621.7233 (1.888.621.SAFE) (Canada)
- Provide cool space for breaks. Consider getting heat-reducing window coverings or awnings for break rooms and/or worker housing. If possible, install air conditioning or a heat pump. There might be government rebates for cooling systems.
- During heat events, ensure that there are vehicles available if medical help is needed, as there may be a high demand for ambulances

For more information on heat safety, visit [fraserhealth.ca/heatsafety](https://fraserhealth.ca/heatsafety)