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SAFETY RESOURCES
Toolbox Talks

GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH SUMMER HEAT

1. Monitor the heat index and take precautions when the heat index is above 90°F. Plan your most strenuous activities for early in the morning when the temperatures are coolest. Wear light colored cotton clothing with a looser fit. When working in the sun wear sunglasses and a hat that shades the head, ears and neck. Apply sunscreen regularly to exposed skin.

2. During periods of high heat, drink cold water or other cold non-alcoholic non-caffeinated beverages even if you do not feel thirsty. During moderate activity, in moderately hot conditions, at least one pint of water per hour is needed. Small quantities should be consumed frequently, i.e. about 6 ounces or a medium glass full about every 20 minutes. Those who sweat heavily may need to drink even more than this amount. If your urine becomes dark in color or decreased in amount, you are becoming dehydrated and need to increase your fluid intake. Do not take salt tablets unless advised to do so by your physician. Hourly fluid intake should not exceed 1.5 quarts and daily fluid intake should not exceed 12 quarts.

3. Rest breaks should be taken in an air-conditioned or shaded space. Eat light, cool, easy-to-digest foods such as fruit or salads. Wash your face, head and neck with cold water to further cool down.

4. If you take prescription medications or have a chronic health problem, discuss specific precautions you should take with your health care provider.

5. **Heat cramps** are painful muscle spasms generally in the legs and abdomen that are related to dehydration. Treatment consists of increasing fluids and applying pressure to the cramping muscle.

6. **Heat exhaustion** occurs when a person is unable to keep up with the need to cool his body through the usual mechanisms of radiation and sweating although the body is trying hard to keep up. Symptoms may include: heavy sweating; skin that is cool, pale, and clammy; headache; thready pulse, dizziness, weakness, or fainting; upset stomach; mood changes. Treatment focuses on cooling and hydration. Get the person to a cool spot preferably with a fan or air conditioning vent blowing directly on him. Remove unnecessary clothing including shoes and socks. Place cold compresses or ice on the head, face and neck or have the person wash his head, face and neck with cold water. Have the person drink as many cold fluids as can be tolerated (about 8 ounces every 15 minutes). If the person is dizzy, have him sit or lie down. Symptoms should improve within 15 to 30 minutes with treatment. Watch the person carefully for worsening symptoms and call for emergency assistance if symptoms do not rapidly improve. Do not leave the person alone.

7. **Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Summon emergency medical assistance or get the person to a hospital immediately. Delay can be fatal.** It occurs when heat exhaustion is not treated or does not respond to treatment. The symptoms of heat stroke include: hot dry skin, no sweating, bright red or flushed skin; rapid and strong pulse; high body temperature; mood changes such as irritability, confusion, inability to think straight or unresponsive; seizures. Although heat stroke is usually associated with a lack of sweating and hot, dry skin, heat stroke may occur while the skin is moist, especially in those performing physical labor. Treatment is focused on aggressive cooling of the person. Begin cooling even while waiting for help to arrive. Move the person to a cool spot preferably with a fan or air conditioning vent blowing on him. Remove as much clothing as possible and place cold wet clothes or ice all over the body or soak the person's clothing with cold water. Keep the clothing or compresses cold. **Generally, do not attempt to have the person drink any fluids.**