



Keep Outdoor workers Safe

A safe worker has a lot to keep in mind. Electrocutation hazards, falls, struck-by incidents and chemical spills all challenge workers to be safe. But when a job necessitates working outdoors, workers may face other, not-so-obvious hazards.

IN THE SUN

Summer's high temperatures and humidity can induce several illnesses such as heat stress, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Symptoms may include headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting, weakness, mood changes or an upset stomach. Severe cases of heat stroke can even result in death.

OSHA's Heat Stress Card provides a reference guide and recommendations to prevent illnesses. Tips include:

- Know the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses; monitor yourself and co-workers.
- Block out direct sun or other heat sources.
- Use cooling fans and air-conditioning; rest regularly.
- Drink lots of water – about 1 cup every 15 minutes.
- Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothes.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeinated drinks and heavy meals.
- Call 911 or the local emergency number immediately if a worker shows signs of heat stress.
- While waiting for help to arrive, move the worker to a shaded area, loosen or remove heavy clothing, provide cool drinking water, and mist the person with water.

AVOIDING WEST NILE VIRUS

The West Nile Virus is most often spread to humans from the bite of an infected mosquito. Most human infections cause no symptoms, and about 20 percent cause flu-like symptoms. Severely affected persons may develop encephalitis or meningitis.

Employers should protect their workers from West Nile exposure by taking the following steps recommended by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health:

- Provide training that describes how West Nile is transmitted and reinforces knowledge about the risks of exposure and infection.
- Stress to workers the importance of reporting all work-related injuries and illnesses in a timely manner.
- Provide a medical surveillance system that monitors, records and assesses the symptoms and absenteeism associated with West Nile infection.
- Provide workers with protective clothing – long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks – and repellents to use on skin and clothing.

Eliminate as many sources of standing water from the worksite as possible to decrease mosquito populations:

- Change the water every 4-5 days in animal drinking troughs, birdbaths and other water containers.
- Scrub the sides of water containers to dislodge eggs.
- Add an aerator to ponds to keep the water circulating, or add fish that will eat the mosquito larvae or adults.
- Remove discarded tires or keep them dry and under cover.



- Turn over, cover, store or remove equipment such as tarps, buckets, barrels, wheelbarrows and containers to prevent standing water.

LYME DISEASE

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported tick-borne disease in the United States, with more than 23,000 cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2005 alone. Outdoor workers – particularly in the northeastern and north-central states – should take measures to prevent onset of this disease, symptoms of which include rash, fever, muscle pain and swollen lymph nodes.

NIOSH offers the following recommendations to protect workers from Lyme disease:

- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing – preferably long-sleeved shirts and long pants with the pant legs tucked into boots or socks.
- Use insect repellent, paying close attention to the product's instructions for use and length of effectiveness.
- Insecticides such as permethrin can be used on clothing for increased protection.
- Whenever possible, avoid working in areas with bushes, tall grass or leaves. When this is not possible, try to control the area as much as possible by cutting down tall grass and clearing leaf litter.
- Check yourself thoroughly for ticks every day, as ticks can be very small and hard to see. Pay close attention to your hair, underarms and groin.
- If found, immediately remove ticks with fine-tipped tweezers. Grip the tick firmly and pull away from your body in a steady motion. Wash the area well with soap and warm water.
- Wash work clothes and dry them in a hot dryer to kill any ticks that may be in the material.

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