



ILA-USMX JOINT SAFETY COMMITTEE

OSH Circular 2020-06 (12 June 2020)

Heat Stress

With the approach of Summer 2020, it's appropriate to consider the issue of on-the-job heat stress and the importance of taking proactive measures in order to combat the increasing amounts of heat and humidity that have a tendency to appear at this time of year.

Moreover, with the Covid-19 experience not as yet over the necessary protective requirement of wearing a filtering facepiece/mask can only serve to complicate the issue of on-the-job heat stress to greater and lesser degrees. That's why it's important to get things straight from the offset.

Wearing a filtering facepiece/mask is an important part of keeping our workers and our managers protected from the transmission of the Covid-19 virus. And while we are aware that some will, from time to time, raise the issue of adequate breathing/heat tolerance limitations that may arise in the wearing of those protections, this is not the appropriate time to let down our guard. Consequently, the requirement of wearing a filtering facepiece/mask (coupled with appropriate social distancing and diligent personal and infrastructure disinfection) cannot be waived within any discussion of heat stress.

OSHA has, however; for many years, set out well established protocols in affirmatively addressing the mitigation of heat stress. Perhaps the most important of those protocols:

- 1).** *Adequate hydration (drinking plenty of water before and during high heat and humidity levels are being experienced);*
- 2).** *Modification of work schedules and arrangement for frequent hydration/rest breaks in shaded/air conditioned environments; and*
- 3).** *Gradually acclimating workers who are newly entering (or rejoining after an absence) work that is to be performed in high heat/high humidity workplaces.*

OSHA has devised a "Quick card" which sets out additional guidelines that employers and workers can take in effectively dealing with heat stress circumstances.

Here's a link to it: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3154.pdf>

Got an OSH-related question? Write to the JSC at: blueoceana@optonline.net

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