



MSU DAWG TRACKS

Here we are once again working in Mississippi heat. It cannot be avoided, but it can be not-so-bad with preparation and taking precautions.

Agriculture is at the top of the list for workers that suffer from heat-related illnesses. Over half of heat-related fatalities occur in those who are not acclimated to working in hot environments. It takes time to build up a tolerance to heat.

Acclimatize to the heat...

- When temperatures first begin to increase in the early summer.
- When new workers start.
- When existing workers have been absent for one week or more and may have become unacclimated.
- When it is significantly warmer than previous days (this could be because of intense sun exposure, higher humidity, or more PPE needed to be worn).

To help workers build heat tolerance, reduce the duration of the work, but not the intensity.

This can be accomplished by using the *Rule of 20 Percent* ... The first day work 20% of the normal duration. Then each additional day add 20% to that duration until the worker is performing a normal schedule. For example: Someone working 8 hours will only work 1 hour, 36 minutes the first day in the heat, the next day 3 hours, 12 minutes.

According to OSHA, "By following the *Rule of 20 Percent*, new workers will be working a full schedule by the end of their first week. The Rule of 20 Percent should protect most workers who are physically fit and have no medical problems. Other workers may require more time to adapt to heat – up to 14 days in some cases."

Sources:

<https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/>

Workers that are acclimated to the heat still need plenty of breaks and hydration to avoid heat exhaustions.

Heat exhaustion symptoms:

- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Excessive sweating
- Cool, pale, clammy skin
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Muscle cramps

Treatment:

- Get to a cool, air-conditioned place.
- Drink water if fully conscious.
- Take a cool shower.
- Use a cold compress.

Some great tips from our own employees, that may help you in the heat.

- ✓ Come in early, so get started and finished before hottest part of the day.
- ✓ Drink water BEFORE work; start out already hydrated.
- ✓ Drink one Gatorade for every two bottles of water.
- ✓ Drink consistently; don't wait until you are thirsty. Eat something, even if it's just a protein bar.
- ✓ Freeze water bottles; then carry one around to drink or put on you to cool off.
- ✓ Don't let working and competing with the "be tuff and take it" guy cloud good judgement...no shame in retreating to the truck cab a/c for a break when needed.
- ✓ Over half your body's heat escapes through you head, so wear a well-ventilated hat with a brim all the way around and wear a light-colored, loose-fitting shirt.
- ✓ Soak cooling rags in cold water & wear under hat.
- ✓ Be aware of effects new medicines you have been prescribed or health conditions that can cause more sweating than before, or an overall greater sensitivity to heat.
- ✓ Watch out for each other. When one person feels like he needs a break, all take one.

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