Tailgate Safety Talk

Information You Can Use to Prevent Accidents & Injuries

First Aid Tips for Heat Exposure

When its time for spring and summer work, it's also is a good time to discuss heat stress with your crews. Any operation involving high air temperatures, high humidity, or strenuous physical work has a high potential for causing heat stress.

Heat stroke is always life-threatening. Heat exhaustion is a milder condition but both can happen on hot days during heavy work. Anyone can have either condition so you need to know what to do about it. Know the symptoms. Certain people may be more prone to heat disorders if they have been drinking, have high blood pressure, or are not used to hard work in the heat. In the case of heat stroke, the person's body temperature controls stop working. The body temperature rises so high that brain damage and death will result if the person isn't cooled down right away.

You will notice red or flushed skin that is hot and dry. The person may by dizzy, vomit, have a headache, rapid pulse, and lapse into unconsciousness. Cool the victim quickly. Use cool but not ice cold water. Get medical help right away.

Heat exhaustion is much less dangerous. The major signs are pale, clammy skin with heavy sweating and extreme weakness. The body temperature may be near normal and the person may have a headache and may vomit. For mild heat exhaustion, take a break, loosen clothing, and slowly drink water to cool down. You can take steps to prevent heat disorders by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Don't take salt tablets because they actually cause additional dehydration and can cause blood pressure to elevate.

Sunburns can be as simple as turning slightly red or enough to cause blistering, fever, nausea, and permanent scarring. Almost everyone has suffered through one sunburn sometime during their lifetime. A sunburn is a skin reaction to light rays, not heat rays. That's why it is possible for someone to get burned on a cold, sunny day. There are many common misconceptions about when people will and will not get a sunburn. Some people think they will not burn on hazy, overcast days. Actually these conditions can enhance the effect of the sun on the skin.

By contrast, the dirt particles and smoke that contaminate the air in the city may provide considerable protection against sunburn by absorbing the sun's rays. Another misconception is that portions of the body covered by water can't burn. Experiments have shown that the burning rays of the sun are capable of penetrating water and reaching your skin.

Sunburns can be avoided by practicing common sense in exposing yourself to sunlight. Redness doesn't appear at once, but several hours after exposure. If you stay in the sun until your skin turns red, you're in for a really good burn.

Unfortunately, there is no specific treatment for sunburn. The best way to provide relief from the discomfort without doing further damage is to apply an ointment, wet compress, or soothing lotion. Most mild sunburns will heal without treatment if left alone. If the pain is excessive or if the skin shows extreme blistering, see your doctor. Prevent a bad sunburn by using a lotion that has a chemical sunscreen or block and spread it on freely!