

Working in Heat

What are the dangers or effects of working in high heat and/or intense sunlight?

- Increased risk of accidents, susceptibility to errors
- Heat stroke (skin redness, rapid breathing, accelerated heartbeat, disorientation, coma – attention: danger to life)
- Heat collapse (blood pressure drop, feeling weak, dizziness, nausea and fainting)
- Sunstroke (nausea, dizziness, severe headache)
- Sunburn, risk of skin cancer development
- Decreasing work performance and quality of work (30-70% during summer heatwaves)

Time off due to excessively hot weather?

- No temperature limits are set by law.
→ No entitlement to "time off" at certain temperatures.

BUT: The employer is legally obliged to take measures to keep heat stress as low as possible (duty of care).

Collective measures (e.g. installation of awnings) take precedence over individual measures (e.g. applying sunscreen).

What measures are reasonable?

- Supply of soft drinks
- Shading of the workplace, e.g. by sunshades / awnings
- Protective clothing, e.g. sun hats, neck protection, cooling vests, UV-safe clothing, sunglasses
- Applying sunscreen
- Refrigerated crew containers / common rooms
- Cooling box / refrigerator for drinks and food
- Organisational measures (earlier start of work, avoid midday heat)
- Instruction of employees / workers in first aid, especially in the event of heat collapse, sunstroke, heat stroke
- Indoors: relax the dress regulations (light footwear, summer clothes), providing fans (avoid drafts), airing in the morning and evening (cool down during the night), shading by outdoor blinds

What applies to indoor work?

- The employer must ensure that the following air temperatures are maintained as far as possible:
 - a. Low physical strain (sitting, office work): min. 19°C and max. 25°C
 - b. Normal physical strain (standing): min. 18°C and max. 24°C
 - c. High physical strain (industrial activities): min. 12°C
- Exceptions are possible if the usage purpose of the room does not allow the above values (e.g. glass house, cold storage)
- There is no fundamental right to air conditioning.

What to do in case of heat emergencies – first aid measures?

- Start the rescue chain = First responder (incl. emergency call) – Ambulance service – Hospital (in case of doubt ALWAYS call an ambulance!)
- Do not leave the affected person unattended
- Supine positioning in a cool room, with legs elevated
- Provide hydration
- Place water-soaked, cool towels in the neck and on skin

Translated language:

English

Heat