

\*\*\*\*\*

## **AG SAFETY S.T.A.T. – SAFE TACTICS FOR AG TODAY**

Vol.3 No. 6e June 2010

NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH – SPECIAL BULLETIN

THOUGHTS for the WEEK – HEAT

SOAKING up the SUN

SURVIVING the SUMMER HEAT

HEATSTROKE

HEAT EXHAUSTION

HEAT CRAMPS

\*\*\*\*\*

### **THOUGHTS for the WEEK – HEAT**

#### **Dee Jepsen, State safety Leader**

Summer is a great time to be outdoors, however, being exposed to hot weather for too long can result in serious health problems. In 2006, between the months of May and August, 611 unintentional-injury deaths occurred due to heat exposure. Take precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses by monitoring children and the elderly during heat waves. Never leave children or people with poor mobility unattended in a parked car, even with the windows rolled down the temperature inside the car can rise above 115 degrees Fahrenheit.

### **SOAKING up the SUN**

During late spring and summer many people like to spend time outside in the sun for fun or work. Overexposure to the sun can damage the skin and is the most common cause of skin cancer. Heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat rash are possible when you become overexerted in the heat. Put your health first in order to enjoy the summer.

- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to keep your head and face cool. This will also provide added protection from damaging sun exposure. Baseball caps provide little protection except to the face. A hat should protect the neck, face and ears.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt at all times. It should be light colored and loose fitting except when working around machinery.
- Carry a source of water with you. Take drinks frequently—every 15 minutes.
- Take frequent breaks in the shade or in a cool environment during the hottest times of the day.
- Adjust gradually to working in the heat over a period of 10-20 days.
- Someone suffering from heat exhaustion or heat stroke should be moved to a cool environment, offered sips of water, if conscious, and provided with attention from emergency medical personnel.
- Wear sunscreen that has an SPF of at least 15. Make sure children are also adequately protected.

### **SURVIVING the SUMMER HEAT**

Heat illness includes a range of disorders that result when your body is exposed to more heat than it can handle. The human body is constantly engaged in a life-and-death struggle to disperse the heat that it produces. If allowed to accumulate, the heat would quickly increase your body temperature beyond its comfortable 98.6° F. Heat-related illness can affect anyone not used to hot weather, especially when it's combined with high humidity. People especially at risk for heat illness:

- Infants, young children, elderly and pets
- Individuals with heart or circulatory problems or other long-term illness
- Overweight or obese individuals
- Employees working in the heat
- Athletes and people who like to exercise (especially beginners)
- Individuals taking certain medications that alter sweat production

- Alcoholics and drug users

## HEATSTROKE

Heatstroke is the most serious and life-threatening heat-related illness. In certain circumstances, your body can build up too much heat, your temperature may rise to life-threatening levels, and you can become delirious or lose consciousness. If you do not rid your body of excess heat fast enough, it "cooks" the brain and other vital organs. It is often fatal, and those who do survive may have permanent damage to their vital organs. Some symptoms of heatstroke are:

- The victim's body feels extremely hot when touched.
- Altered mental status (behavior) ranging from slight confusion and disorientation to coma.
- Conscious victims usually become irrational, agitated, or even aggressive and may have seizures.
- In severe heatstroke, the victim can go into a coma in less than one hour. The longer the coma lasts, the lower the chance for survival.

If a person is experiencing heatstroke, move the person to a half-sitting position in the shade. Call for emergency medical help immediately. If humidity is below 75%, spray victim with water and vigorously fan. If humidity is above 75%, apply ice packs on neck, armpits or groin.

## HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion is characterized by heavy perspiration with normal or slightly above normal body temperatures. It is caused by severe dehydration, due to water or salt depletion or a combination of both conditions Heat exhaustion affects workers and athletes who do not drink enough fluids while working or exercising in hot environments. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- Severe thirst, fatigue, headache, nausea, vomiting and sometimes diarrhea.
- The affected person often mistakenly believes he or she has the flu.
- Uncontrolled heat exhaustion can evolve into heatstroke
- Profuse sweating
- Clammy or pale skin
- Dizziness
- Rapid pulse
- Normal or slightly above normal body temperature

If a person is experiencing heat exhaustion they should, sit or lie down in the shade. Drink cool water or a sports drink. If persistent, gently apply wet towels and call for emergency medical help.

## HEAT CRAMPS

Heat cramps are painful muscular spasms that happen suddenly affecting legs or abdominal muscles. They usually happen after physical activity in people who sweat a lot or have not had enough fluids. If a person is experiencing heat cramps they should, sit or lie down in the shade. Drink cool water or a sports drink. Stretch affected muscles.

This bulletin was compiled using information from the National Safety Council. For additional information about heat illness, please visit their website at [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)

\*\*\*\*\*  
*Ag Safety S.T.A.T. - Safe Tactics for Ag Today* is an e-mail newsletter prepared by Dee Jepsen, Extension Agricultural Safety Specialist and team members from the State Safety Office, in the Department of Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering at OSU. The primary goal of this monthly newsletter is to help you stay connected to everyday safety news and activities that may be used in your own newsletters or programs. If you have safety-related questions or program ideas that you would like to share, please contact Dr. Jepsen at [jepsen.4@osu.edu](mailto:jepsen.4@osu.edu)  
\*\*\*\*\*