Managing heat stress: new standard on the way, plus tips for today

Seasonal heat and humidity is coming, if not here already. By the end of 2016, employers will have access to a new guideline for protecting workers from a number of extreme conditions, such as high heat and humidity, cold temperatures and severe weather.

If you have workers that work in high heat and humidity, **Ontario Restaurant Hotel Motel Association** is pleased to bring you information on an upcoming standard for managing heat stress.

When complete, CSA Z1010 - Management of Work in Extreme Conditions will provide a made-in-Canada set of guidelines for workplaces dealing with these conditions inside, outside and in confined spaces, says Dave Shanahan, CSA’s OHS standards project manager. Grouping extreme conditions together will make it easier for workplaces to develop a comprehensive solution in line with their existing health and safety management program.

Like the existing standards in the CSA Z1000 series, CSA Z1010 will be systems-based. These standards offer a continuous improvement framework featuring processes for

- identifying and eliminating hazards
- assessing and controlling risks associated with hazards that cannot be eliminated
- implementing hazard reduction structures and practices
- fostering a health and safety culture

The new standard will also be based on best practices. "We've got everybody on board," says Shanahan. "Industry people, labour, regulators, academics who study this area, police and fire fighters, are all helping us out with the standard."

**Addressing heat hazards now**

"This time of year we do see situations where people can easily become dehydrated and suffer heat stress," says Shanahan. Other risks for workers include burns and melanoma. Young workers are particularly at risk, says Shanahan. "Some younger people are not used to it; they tend to overdo it without realizing what danger they are in by working too hard in heat they’re not used to."

Employers can minimize risks by developing a policy and procedures that includes such elements as

- training staff on the hazards, symptoms and prevention of heat stress
- designing work to
  - acclimatize workers, especially new and young workers
- schedule jobs with high heat exposure to cooler times of day
- reduce physical demands during high heat times
- include adequate rest and hydration breaks
- provide cool areas during break periods
- provide relief workers or extra workers for physically demanding jobs

- setting up systems for reporting incidents and initiating first aid
- monitoring weather reports daily and/or reducing the physical demands
- providing plenty of cool water in convenient, visible locations close to the work area
- providing protective equipment and clothing

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) offer a range of expertise and resources to help protect workers from heat stress and other extreme conditions.

- Speak with a WSPS consultant, who can help you set up a heat stress policy and program and/or deliver a 2-hour awareness session to your workers.
- Enroll managers and supervisors in Certification Part Two - Extreme Temperature Hazards.
- Download these and other heat stress resources:
  - OHSCO Heat Stress Poster, offering simple tips to help your workers protect themselves
  - OHSCO Humidex Based Heat Response Plan.

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