

Farm and city folks both enjoy working and being outdoors. However as we move into the middle of summer we need to be reminded that extreme hot weather can also be a major health concern.

Working in extreme heat for long periods of time can increase the risk of a heat stress injury such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke. These types of injuries can occur when the body cannot regulate its temperature and can become serious medical emergencies if precautions are not taken.

Individuals with pre-existing conditions, such as limited mobility, heart disease, and taking certain medications are at an even higher risk to a heat stress injury and should consult with their local health care provider before working for an extended period in extreme heat. Some precautions should include:

- When possible, strenuous work should be scheduled for the coolest time of day. Generally early morning is the coolest part of the day.
- Wear light-colored and lightweight clothing. Light colors reflect heat and sunlight and the combination of lightweight material will help the body maintain normal temperature.
- Take multiple short breaks throughout the day. Breaks should be in a shaded area or controlled temperature environment.
- Equipment or machines that give off additional heat during operations may add additional stress on hot days. Alternate these operations with tasks in cooler environments, such as shade or temperature controlled environments.
- It is important for the body to stay hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after strenuous activities.
- Drink cold fluids and avoid consuming alcoholic beverages. Cold fluids can help cool the body; alcoholic beverages may encourage dehydration.
- Adjust your diet when working in heat. Avoid foods that are high in protein because they increase metabolism, increasing body heat and water loss.
- Do not get too much sun. Avoid scheduling outdoor tasks in direct sunlight, such as the middle of the day.
- Use sunscreen. Sunburn makes it more difficult to regulate and reduce body temperature.

- During hot days, spend time in air-conditioned facilities, especially during periods of rest. Breaks in air conditioning will allow the body to recuperate from heat.

Additional health information on working outdoors in extreme heat and other agricultural safety information may be found on Ohio State University's AgrAbility website, <http://agrability.osu.edu/factsheets>.