

Working in Heat

1. **Hot weather and heat extremes cause health risks.** You can develop heat exhaustion: feeling faint or dizzy, excessive sweating, clammy skin, nausea or vomiting, muscle cramps and or Heatstroke which is extremely serious: feeling confused, no sweating, temperature over 40C, hot, dry skin, nausea or vomiting, may lose consciousness or experience convulsions or seizures. This is a medical emergency. Other symptoms can include heat rash, heat edema, heat syncope, heat cramps.
2. **What does the law say?** Health and safety legislation does not state any maximum temperature. While there isn't a legal maximum working temperature, employers must ensure reasonable and safe working temperatures, especially during extreme heat. The [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) recommends employers assess risks, implement control measures, and provide adequate support for workers in hot environments.
3. What **control measures can be introduced depends on the sector, the work activity and the individual.** It is also important to identify progressive actions to be taken when temperatures rise and not wait until the working environment is too hot and unsafe to work in.
4. **Controls could include:**
 - a. **Control the environment**
 - i. Monitor temperature and humidity
 - ii. Replace hot air with cold
 - iii. Humidify the air as required
 - iv. Increase air movement by ventilation or air conditioning
 - v. Provide additional air con units and industrial fans for hottest parts of building and greatest work activity
 - vi. Direct ventilation or air movement on to workers
 - vii. Provide cooling areas – shade or air-conditioned rest rooms
 - viii. Ensure workers are not carrying out work activity in direct sunlight
 - ix. Chill working environment
 - x. Relocate to cooler premises if possible/necessary

Britain has experienced its hottest summer in over 100 years. Excessive heat can be dangerous. In extreme cases it can kill. Unions can't control the weather, but CAN protect you from unacceptable temperatures.

www.hazards.org/heat

- xi. Ensure all vehicles have air conditioning and they are maintained, this may mean portable equipment

b. Separate the source of heat from workers

- i. Use barriers to restrict access to hottest areas
- ii. Provide shade
- iii. Redesign activity to provide safe areas to perform
- iv. Restrict heat sources from equipment
- v. Curtail heat-generating activities if possible – use of computers etc.

c. Improve Welfare Facilities

- i. Workers to always have access to cool drinking water
- ii. Provide sports drinks, ice creams/lollies and rehydration sachets
- iii. Provide ice packs, frozen towels, ice buckets or additional fridge-freezers in staff rooms and changing areas
- iv. Adequate toilet facilities available

d. Control the activity/task

- i. Reduce the amount of time workers are exposed to hot conditions, this may mean rotating work patterns
- ii. Control the amount of work and rate of work people are expected to do
- iii. Introduce mechanical aids for physically demanding jobs in warm and hot environments or when workers are wearing a lot of clothing
- iv. Introduce more breaks between physical activity

e. Control clothing

- i. Make sure workers are not wearing more than is needed
- ii. Choose designs or materials that improve thermal comfort
- iii. Relax dress codes so workers can adapt their clothing where necessary

f. Allow workers to adapt their behaviour

- i. Ask safety reps/workers about their thermal comfort
- ii. Where possible, allow workers to make adjustments to their clothing including uniforms or work rate
- iii. For performers allow alterations/removal of costumes/make up where possible and relaxations of formal dress requirements including wearing of shorts and Consider alternatives/under study/swings to play second performances on matinee days
- iv. Provide cool down areas
- v. Provide personal fans, sunscreen etc
- vi. Allow workers to adjust thermostats and open windows as appropriate / keep windows closed and blinds down in dressing

rooms etc / longer term investment in heat reflective blinds/films or shutters for windows

- vii. Individuals with signs of heat exhaustion should be able to immediately stop work to recover
- viii. Introduce flexible working to avoid stifling rush hour commutes where possible and/or taxis to transport vulnerable workers
- ix. Enable workers to work from home if possible

g. Monitor employees

- i. Provide appropriate supervision and training. Including educating workers about the early signs of heat stress and importance of hydration and taking breaks in the shade
- ii. Individual risk assessments for workers who are pregnant, have an illness or disability or on certain medication or have a hormonal imbalance due to the menopause or thyroid imbalance
- iii. Communicate regularly with all workers and co-ordinate all heat related control measures with building managers to ensure a safe and healthy working environment
- iv. Ensure symptoms of heat stroke are dealt with quickly by first aider and referred to medical professionals

h. Administrative Controls:

- i. Scheduling 'hot' work for cooler times of the day or even cancel
- ii. Shorten length of work periods and increase length of rest periods
- iii. Having flexible hours to avoid worst effects of high temperature working – scheduling some tasks for early morning or late afternoon – not between 11am-3pm
- iv. Introduce emergency procedures to extreme heat i.e. halt or cancel work
- v. Having competent first aiders trained in recognising and managing heat related illness
- vi. For performers, including sports people, and other carrying out physical activities, plan for possibility of needing to alter times of activities as well as rehearsals/practices

i. Engineering controls:

- i. Introducing and maintaining air conditioning units or providing temporary ones for extreme weather incidents
- ii. Providing fans – portable, ceiling or exhaust fans
- iii. Other things could include evaporative coolers or thermal insulation
- iv. Check that windows can be opened
- v. If portable equipment is used then further RA

vi. Suitable storage and maintenance of portable equipment

Further information:

- HSE heat stress checklist
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/assets/docs/heat-stress-checklist.pdf>
- **Met office Red Alerts** – likely to be a risk to life with substantial disruption to travel, energy supplies and possibly widespread damage to property and infrastructure. People should avoid travelling, where possible and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.
<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/guides/warnings>
- Safety reps workplace inspection on working in heat
- Negotiate with your employer and identify actions on working in heat, including changing working hours, stopping work activities that are unsafe. The TUC believes that actions should start at 24C. All workers should be safe and healthy at work.
- Regulation 8 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 focuses on establishing procedures for serious and imminent danger. It outlines the employer's responsibility to create and implement these procedures, nominate competent individuals to manage them, and ensure employees are informed and protected in dangerous situations.
- If employers fail to assess and control the risks properly or fail to put in place procedures for a serious and imminent danger then safety reps should escalate through their internal procedures and if appropriate escalate to the enforcement body. Safety reps can contact the HSE about something that has either used, or has the potential to cause significant harm.
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/hsrepresentatives.htm>
- S44 / S100 Employment Rights Act 1996 states that employees are protected from detriment or dismissal where there exist circumstances of danger which they reasonably believe to be serious and imminent, and they leave or propose to leave, or otherwise refuse to return to their place of work (or any dangerous part of the workplace). Before taking this action union members should seek advice from their trade union.