



Tailgate Safety Talk

Information You Can Use to Prevent Accidents & Injuries

Temperature Extremes

When we think of temperature extremes, we usually think of being too hot or too cold. And whether we are indoors or out, temperature extremes can do more than make us uncomfortable. They can cause some serious problems. While working we "burn off" the food we have eaten. But besides the heat we generate during this process, there is the heat of our surroundings.

Since our bodies must stay close to 98.6 degrees, we need to get rid of excess heat by sweating. The perspiration evaporating from our skin cools us down, but in humid weather this process is slowed because of the already damp air. And if the sweat process is not enough to keep our body temperature down, heat stress can occur.

In some cases, **heat stress** results in minor problems such as muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness caused by lack of blood supply to the brain, and prickly heat, a rash caused by clogged skin pores. Although these problems may be annoying, you should move to a cooler location.

Symptoms of **heat exhaustion** caused by the body's inability to replace lost fluids may include sweating, clammy skin, pale or flushed complexion, weakness, dizziness, nausea, a weak pulse, and shallow breathing. If this happens along with vomiting or loss of consciousness, seek medical attention right away.

Heat stroke occurs when the body's cooling system completely shuts down. This is a medical emergency and can cause permanent damage or death. Symptoms include lack of sweating, high body temperature, hot and dry flushed skin, weakness, confusion, loss of consciousness, or convulsions.

To avoid heat-related problems, you should wear light and loose-fitting clothing. Work at a reasonable pace and rest if you get weak, clumsy or can't concentrate on what you're doing. Drink plenty of water throughout the work day. Work should be planned so the heavy part can be done early in the day.

Just as a rise in body temperature can be harmful, so can a temperature decrease. Although the body has a process for warming itself, sometimes because of extremely cold air, it loses heat faster than it can produce it.

Users of this tailgate talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations.