

Safety-Gram

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On average, extreme heat caused more deaths during the last ten years than any other weather phenomena. The United States averages more than 1,300 heat-related deaths annually. Prevention strategies and education are the best ways to reduce heat stress occurrences at work or home.

Fact or Fiction?

We've all heard the "facts" about heat-related injuries, but how many are actually fiction? Keep reading to learn the *real* facts!

Fiction: You cannot suffer heat illness if you are properly hydrated.

Fact: Hydration is important, but it alone cannot prevent heat illness such as heat stroke or heat exhaustion. Acclimatization (introducing heat over a period of 7-14 days), environmental conditions, activity intensity and duration, individual risk factors, and the type of equipment being worn are all factors.

Fiction: If a person is still sweating, it is not an emergency.

Fact: While some people experiencing heat stroke will stop sweating, those who were working hard in the heat will likely be sweating profusely. Common signs of heat stroke include mental status changes, dizziness, irrational behavior, confusion, weakness, vomiting, diarrhea, and rapid breathing.

Fiction: People know when they are experiencing heat illness.

Fact: Disorientation is a sign of heat illness, making it difficult for employees to recognize their own symptoms. Employees must watch out for one another. Take the buddy system seriously and know the importance of alerting supervisors or medical personnel if a coworker is behaving oddly.

Fiction: Someone suffering a heat illness could be harmed if their bodies are cooled too quickly.

Fact: Rapid cooling from ice baths, ice sheets, or other methods are the most effective treatment for heat stroke and can significantly reduce mortality. Stop the cooling if the individual begins to shiver. Make sure they are sipping cool water or a sports drink while cooling off.

Fiction: Heat illness only occurs at certain temperatures.

Fact: While most cases occur when the temperature exceeds 90 degrees, heat illness can happen in lower temperatures, including the 70s. CBP employees have suffered heat illnesses in the middle of a cool night and at northern border stations. Environment plays a big role, but so does the level and duration of physical exertion, acclimatization, hydration, and individual risk factors such as recent illness.

★ **HAVE A SAFE SUMMER!** ★