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**SMALL BUSINESS**

# Beat the Summer Heat: Tips for Avoiding Heat Stress at Work

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Isaac M. O'Bannon • Jul. 01, 2014



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The [Centers for Disease Control](#) warns that workers who are exposed to extreme heat or work, whether on the way to work or on the job, may be at risk of heat stress and such exposure can result in occupational illnesses and injuries. Workers at risk of heat stress include outdoor workers and workers in hot environments such as firefighters, bakery workers, farmers, construction workers, miners, boiler room workers, factory workers, and others. Workers at greater risk of heat stress include those who are 65 years of age or older, are overweight, have heart disease or high blood pressure, or take medications that may be affected by extreme heat.

Since heat stress can result in heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, heat rashes and other serious medical issues, workers and their employers need to keep an eye out for signs of distress, and proactively take steps that can help prevent it.

Office supply store [Staples](#) offers several tips to implement a summer safety plan:

- **Think beyond water.** Water isn't enough if you're working in the heat – make sure you're offering the right beverages for your workers. While sports drinks seem like a good option, your employees lose fluid differently than athletes, so be mindful of drinks with electrolyte and potassium levels specific for their needs.
- **Provide electrolytes beyond fluids.** Offer dual-purpose hydrating snacks that taste good but also provide necessary electrolytes, such as popsicles which cool as they hydrate, and gummy snacks that keep electrolyte levels up throughout the day.
- **Offer cooling gear.** Cooling bandanas and vests are a great way to ensure your employees' comfort in hot conditions. For outdoor workers, it's important their vision is not impaired by the sunlight, so consider sunglasses that attach to the back of their hard hats.
- **Educate your staff.** Emphasize the need for workers to protect themselves and make products readily accessible to encourage use. Consider placing posters around the workplace that highlight the daily heat index and how much liquid workers should consume.

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