

Loss

Control



FARMERS

Information Bulletin

Food Service Industry Heat Hazards

The cooking exposures within the food service industry expose employees to high temperatures that can result in health problems such as heat cramps, heat rashes, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

At high temperatures, the body circulates great amounts of blood to the skin in an effort to eliminate heat through perspiration. As a result, less blood is circulated to the body's vital organs, including the brain. Heat exhaustion results and can lead to dizziness, blurred vision, nausea, and eventual collapse. If not treated promptly by lowering the person's body temperature, a person suffering from heat exhaustion could suffer brain damage.

Even more serious than heat exhaustion is heat stroke. During heat stroke, the body stops sweating, making it impossible to dissipate heat. The body temperature may rise to a dangerously high level in a short time and cause death.

Worker exposure to hot kitchen environments that can reach 105 to 110 degrees while cooking in front of hot grills exposes workers to heat that may lead to heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and possible death.

Management steps to reduce the potential of heat hazard related injuries include:

- *Requiring employees to wear cool, comfortable, breathable clothing like cotton.*
- *Instruct employees to tell a co-worker or a manager if they are not feeling well.*
- *Train management and employees how to recognize and treat the early symptoms of heat illnesses.*
- *Provide adequate breaks for employees to allow their body to cool down from working in hot environments.*

- *Instruct employees not to drink alcoholic beverages or beverages that contain caffeine while working in hot environments because these beverages make the body lose water and increase the risk of heat illnesses.*
- *Advise employees to drink plenty of water.*
- *Have employees observe any safety procedures or wear any management provided protective equipment required for working in hot environments.*

Workplace conditions under the control of management can also reduce the potential for heat related illnesses to their workers. The following areas need to be considered and implemented where possible:

- *Keep cooking areas as cool as possible especially during peak rush periods.*
Use spot cooling fans, evaporative cooling, air conditioning, general ventilation, and local exhaust ventilation at points of high heat production.
- *Acclimatize, or gradually introduce, employees to hot environments.*
This allows the body to build up a tolerance to high temperatures. This generally takes about two weeks.

Symptoms and Treatment:

Heat exhaustion symptoms include dizziness, lightheadedness, weakness, blurred vision, and nausea.

- *Treatment:*
 - Lower the employee's body temperature to prevent the progression of symptoms. Immediately remove the employee from the hot environment and give them cool water to drink.
 - Lay the person on his or her back and raise the legs.

If the person is sick to his or her stomach, lay them on their side. If the person does not feel better in a few minutes, call for emergency help.

Heat stroke symptoms include severe headache, mental confusion, loss of consciousness, flushed face, and hot, dry, skin, with no sweating. If someone has stopped sweating, seek emergency medical attention immediately.

■ *Treatment:*

- Get emergency medical help. You must try to

lower the employee's body temperature while waiting for medical help to arrive. Provide a cool environment, remove excessive clothing, and wet and fan the workers' skin.

Exposure to heat related illnesses is a serious consideration for the food service industry. Management's attention to the sources of exposure, controls needed, identification and treatment are critical to reducing the potential of a serious workplace illness caused by the hot environment of the kitchen's cooking equipment.