Toolbox talk

Working in heat, cold and sun

Dress for it, drink for it, plan for it

10 minutes | For: Anyone working outdoors

Why it matters

Outdoor workers face heat stress, cold stress and long-term sun damage. UK summers are getting hotter, and long hours in the sun raise the risk of skin cancer.

Key points

1. Heat stress happens when your body can't keep itself cool. Hard work, heavy PPE and humidity add to it.
2. Early signs of heat illness include heavy sweating, headache, dizziness, cramps and feeling sick.
3. Drink water little and often. Don't wait until you feel thirsty.
4. In hot weather, plan heavy work for cooler parts of the day and take breaks in the shade.
5. Sun damage builds up over years. Keep your top on, use sunscreen and wear a brim or neck flap.
6. Cold makes hands clumsy and slows reactions. Wear layers and keep dry.
7. Ice, wind and rain change the risks for ladders, scaffolds, roofs and lifting.
8. Look out for each other. People with heat illness often don't notice it themselves.

Sources: HSE: Outdoor working, heat, cold and sun; HSE: Heat stress; NHS: Heat exhaustion and heatstroke; HSE: Outdoor workers and sun exposure.

This talk supports, but does not replace, your site-specific risk assessment, method statement, training and supervision. Free to copy and use. **tradefoxapp.com/toolbox-talks/weather**

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Do

- Keep water with you and refill it often.
- Use a high-factor sunscreen and reapply it during the day.
- Take breaks somewhere shaded or warm, depending on the weather.
- Wear layers in the cold and change out of wet clothes.
- Check your skin for new or changing moles and see your GP if worried.

Don't

- Don't take your top off in the sun.
- Don't rely on energy drinks or caffeine to keep going.
- Don't push on if you feel dizzy, confused or sick.
- Don't work at height or lift in high winds without checking it's safe.

Ask the group

- Where can we get water and shade on this site?
- What signs would tell you a mate is overheating?
- Which jobs should we move to earlier in the day in hot weather?
- What changes when it's icy or windy on this job?

If it goes wrong: Confusion, a fit or collapse in the heat can mean heatstroke: call 999. Move them somewhere cool, remove extra clothing and cool their skin with water and a fan. If unresponsive but breathing normally, use the recovery position. If not breathing normally, start CPR and follow the call handler.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____

Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

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Attendance register

Working in heat, cold and sun

Site / project

Date and time

Presented by

Company

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature

Follow-up actions

Quick check

Working in heat, cold and sun

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. Which is an early sign of heat illness?

- [ ] Feeling dizzy or sick
- [ ] Feeling hungry
- [ ] Cold hands

2. When should you drink water in hot weather?

- [ ] Only when thirsty
- [ ] Little and often, all day
- [ ] Only at lunch

3. What's the best way to protect against sun damage?

- [ ] Work with your top off to stay cool
- [ ] Keep covered, wear sunscreen and a brim or neck flap
- [ ] Get a tan early

4. Why can heat illness be hard to spot in yourself?

- [ ] It always comes on slowly
- [ ] It can affect your judgement
- [ ] It only affects older people

5. What should you do if a mate becomes confused in the heat?

- [ ] Let them carry on
- [ ] Call 999 and start cooling them while waiting
- [ ] Give them an energy drink

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Go further: Construction site PPE guide

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For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. Feeling dizzy or sick

Dizziness, headache, cramps, heavy sweating and nausea are early warning signs.

2. Little and often, all day

Thirst is a late signal. Drink little and often throughout the shift.

3. Keep covered, wear sunscreen and a brim or neck flap

Covering up and sunscreen protect against UV damage, which builds up over years.

4. It can affect your judgement

Heat illness can cause confusion, so workmates need to look out for each other.

5. Call 999 and start cooling them while waiting

Confusion in the heat can indicate heatstroke. Call 999, move them to a cool place and cool their skin while waiting.

Sources

- HSE: Outdoor working, heat, cold and sun
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/outdoor-working.htm
- HSE: Heat stress
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/heat-stress.htm
- NHS: Heat exhaustion and heatstroke
  https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/
- HSE: Outdoor workers and sun exposure
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/skin/employ/sunprotect.htm

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

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TRADEFOX

Hot day? Water, shade, top on.

1. Drink little and often
2. Cover up and use sunscreen
3. Look out for your mates

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Hot day? Water, shade, top on.

1. **Drink little and often**
2. **Cover up and use sunscreen**
3. **Look out for your mates**

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Sources and qualifications

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Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. HSE: Outdoor working

Hot/cold weather risk assessment, work timing, breaks, hydration, clothing and supervision.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/outdoor-working.htm

S2. HSE: Heat stress

Heat, exertion, PPE/humidity and symptom awareness; Why it matters, key points and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/heat-stress.htm

S3. NHS: Heat exhaustion and heatstroke

Confusion can indicate heatstroke: call 999 and cool while waiting. Supports revised quiz 5 and emergency response.

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke/

S4. HSE: Sun exposure

Covering skin, shade, sunscreen and checking skin changes; Do/Don't and poster.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/skin/employ/sunprotect.htm

S5. St John Ambulance: Recovery position

Emergency response: recovery position for an unresponsive casualty who is breathing normally.

https://www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/recovery-position/