



Systemic Safety Alert Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work

Summer days in Hong Kong are hot and humid. Workers are at risk of heat stroke while working in a hot environment, indoor and outdoor alike. The Labour Department (“LD”) has serious concerns about workers exposing to the risk of heat stress at such workplaces.

Safety Precautions

RSOs should advise their clients/employers to adopt the following heat stroke preventive measures:-

- i. a task-specific risk assessment having due regard to the specific nature (e.g. long or short duration of work), location (e.g. indoor or outdoor, or remote location), job methods (e.g. manual or with mechanical aid) and plant/equipment to be used in question should be carried out, with the major risk factors in connection with heat stroke, namely temperature, humidity, heat radiation, air movement, workload, clothing and acclimatization, been taken into account;
- ii. The hierarchy of hazard control should be observed in that priority should be accorded to avoid exposing workers to potential heat stroke hazard (e.g. ceasing outdoor extensive manual work under hot climate) or provision of engineering measures/deployment of hazard mitigation measures. The control measures to tackle the hazard of heat stroke should include, but not limited to, the following:
 - Sheltering the workplaces if practicable;
 - Rescheduling outdoor work to cooler periods;
 - Avoiding prolonged working in a hot environment;
 - Providing fans or blowers, if reasonably practicable, at workplaces or rest areas;
 - Providing sufficient potable drinking water to workers or at locations within close proximity to the workers;



- Developing and implementing a suitable emergency plan for the workers working alone at distant workplaces;
 - Wearing suitable clothing such as wide-brimmed hats, thin and air permeable clothing, reflective vests;
 - Taking adequate precautions (e.g. providing cooling vests) when workers have to wear air impermeable coveralls and respirators (e.g. fogging insecticide) while at work on a hot day; and
 - Duly considering the acclimatization factor.
- iii. An effective coordination/communication system among the employer/proprietor (principal contractor and sub-contractors in case of a construction site), different levels of management/supervisory personnel and workers should be established and maintained to ensure clear understanding of potential heat stroke hazards, the associated hazard control program and the delineation of safety responsibilities;
- iv. The workers and management/supervisory personnel should be provided with necessary safety information, instruction and training to ensure that all workers/personnel involved are familiar with the safe working procedures and safety measures in the hazard control system; and
- v. An effective monitoring and control system should be established and maintained to ensure that the safe working procedures and safety measures for heat stroke are strictly followed.

RSAs should take into account these safety precautions in executing safety audit functions.



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