Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work in a Hot Environment

Work arrangement
- Reschedule works to cooler periods in the daytime, such as early morning; and cooler places, such as covered or shaded areas.
- Minimize physical demand by using mechanical aids at work.
- Arrange employees to rest regularly in a cool or shady place during very hot periods.
- Rotate employees to work in hot and cool workplaces alternately.

Suitable clothing
- Wide-brimmed hat or helmet can avoid exposure of face, neck and back to direct sunlight.
- Light-coloured clothing minimizes heat absorption and enhances heat dissipation.
- Air permeable clothing enhances heat dissipation.
- Loose-fitting clothing enhances sweat evaporation, but clothing that is too loose may be entangled in the moving parts of machines.

Employees’ health
- Employees should be trained to observe their body responses. Whenever there are any symptoms of heat stroke, they should inform their supervisors and take appropriate actions immediately.
- Some employees may have difficulties in adapting to the hot work environment because of their health condition or the effects of drugs. Employers should take this into account and consider the recommendations of the employees’ attending doctors when assigning work to these employees.

Supply of cool potable water
- Provide cool potable water for employees at all times during work.
- Encourage employees to take plenty of water or other appropriate beverages to replenish the fluid and electrolytes lost through sweating.

Enquiries
For enquiries on this leaflet or advice on occupational health matters, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Branch of the Labour Department through:
Tel: 2852 4041
Fax: 2581 2049
E-mail: enquiry@labour.gov.hk
Information on the services offered by the Labour Department and on major labour legislation can also be found on our website: www.labour.gov.hk.

Complaints
If you have any complaints about unsafe workplaces and practices, please call the Labour Department’s Occupational Safety and Health Complaint Hotline at 2542 2172. All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.
In accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap.509) and subsidiary legislation, employers must, so far as reasonably practicable, ensure the safety and health at work of their employees, including the provision of sufficient potable water at the workplace.

Summer days in Hong Kong are hot and humid in general. This leaflet lists some appropriate measures that should be taken by employers and employees to prevent heat stroke when working in a hot environment.

**Risk factors**
- High temperature
- High humidity (hinders sweat evaporation)
- Poor ventilation
- High radiant heat load, such as exposure to direct sunlight
- Heavy manual activities
- Wearing inappropriate clothing
- Employee's health

**Common symptoms of heat stroke**
- Thirst, headache, fatigue and lethargy
- Fainting or transient loss of consciousness
- Clammy skin and paleness
- Weak and rapid pulse, and even muscle cramps in severe cases

We should consider all the above factors and should not only rely on a single factor (such as temperature) in assessing the risk of heat stroke.

**Occupations with a higher risk of heat stroke**
- Laundry workers
- Construction site workers or road repairing workers
- Porters
- Kitchen workers
- Outdoor cleansing workers

**A safe and healthy system of work**
- Use appropriate ventilation or air conditioning system
- Avoid working under direct sunlight and set up temporary sunshade whenever possible
- Isolate heat generating facilities at the workplace