

Legal Update Article

White House Pushes OSHA Heat Illness Prevention Initiative

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Workplace Safety and Health

As thermometers hit their peak, the White House is touting the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) heat illness prevention efforts to "protect millions of workers from heat illness and injury."

On July 20, 2022, the White House announced that OSHA has inspected 564 workplaces for heat illness since April 2022.

As part of its Heat Illness Prevention Campaign, OSHA continues to aggressively develop and enforce heat-related hazards initiatives. In April 2022, OSHA unveiled its [National Emphasis Program](#) (NEP) directed at outdoor and indoor heat-related hazards. As part of its NEP, OSHA is generating random inspection lists and conducting inspections of employers on those lists without advance warning. The NEP [purports](#) to target 70 "high risk" sectors, including manufacturing, wholesalers, automotive repair, retail, bakeries, sawmills, landscaping, and construction. OSHA Area Offices will be monitoring National Weather Service heat warnings or advisories for the local area and targeting employers for heat inspections on those days.

OSHA is also moving full steam ahead with its "Heat Injury and Illness Prevention" [rulemaking](#). This signals a shift from OSHA utilizing informal rapid response investigations to prioritizing on-site inspections for workplace complaints and for all employer-reported hospitalizations and fatalities related to heat hazards.

OSHA advises employers during an "OSHA ALERT" to follow safety practices, such as providing cool drinking water, giving frequent rest breaks in shady or cool areas, and offering training on the hazards of heat exposure. The [Heat Safety Tool App](#) created by OSHA is meant to assist employers when planning [outdoor work activities](#).

As part of a heat illness prevention program, employers should have a Heat Illness Prevention Plan that aims to:

- Ensure new workers or those returning from a break in employment or vacation are acclimatized, gradually building up to a full workday in the heat.
- Monitor ambient temperature and levels of work exertion at the worksite, categorizing physical exertion levels as low, moderate, and heavy.
- Provide access to cool water for hydration and ensure workers are drinking enough fluids.
- Ensure that workers have sufficient water and rest breaks.
- Provide access to shade for rest periods and air conditioning or other cooling systems if feasible.
- Consider using a buddy system to have workers monitor one another for symptoms of heat illness.
- Train workers to identify the signs and various stages of heat illness, how to report signs and symptoms, when first aid is required, and when and how to contact emergency personnel.

To learn more, or if you need compliance assistance related to heat injury and illness prevention, defense of an OSHA inspection or citations, please contact a member of the [Workplace Safety and Health Practice Group](#) or the attorney with whom you regularly work.

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