

Do You Have a Heat Stress Plan in Place?

By Mike Benmoschè



It was the end of May of 2002 when a young 30-year-old landscaper collapsed and died after a routine day mowing lawns. It was later determined that the cause was due to heat stroke. The highest temperature that day was 81 degrees.

As many operators know, outside work can be demanding even when the job is relatively simple with minimal physical exertion. In the case of the worker described above, his collapse occurred even though his supervisor offered him water when he complained of feeling light-headed. Did his manager follow appropriate steps? Could this tragedy have been avoided?

There can often be extenuating circumstances that would contribute to a serious heat stress condition. Understanding the signs and how to properly respond can be the difference between life and death.

This landscaping example can easily be compared to the exposures that many carwash employees face on a regular basis. The following are a few thoughts that may assist in developing a heat stress plan for your business:

- ❖ Employers should train all supervisors and managers to monitor all workers during high periods of heat stress.

- ❖ Employees should be trained to come to work as hydrated as possible.
- ❖ Employee shifts should take into account time of exposure to the heat especially when exposed to direct sun.
- ❖ When it is difficult to minimize the time an employee is exposed to the heat, it is recommended that periodically the employee be rotated to a job that is less active.
- ❖ Employers should identify any workers who may have medical conditions or take medications that would predispose them to a heat-related illness. Some drugs increase the risk of becoming dehydrated. If in doubt, have the employee check with his or her physician and get a copy of the results. This should be made a permanent part of the employees employment file.
- ❖ The best time to begin training for potential heat stress is in early spring. Acclimating employees to specific jobs early will help them become physically and mentally prepared. This will assist them to respond to periods of heat stress when the hot weather becomes more persistent.
- ❖ It is recommended that you keep a cooler with water readily available at all times in close proximity to employees.
- ❖ Ensure that your training teaches everyone to recognize the signs and symptoms of a heat-related illness. There are very specific indicators that are available to help learn what many of those warnings are (you can contact me at the email address listed below for more information). Keep in mind that sometimes workers are reluctant to report that they are not feeling well so as not to be perceived as being weak.
- ❖ A general rule, in hot conditions, is one pint of water every 15 to 20 minutes.

The most important message here should be that your wash must have a heat-stress plan in place. It is then imperative that there be a structured training program established to be sure everyone is familiar with the rules. So, if you don't already have this in place, appoint a person at the wash to make it happen now!

Don't be the next employer that has the sad story that reports another loss of life due a very preventable event. ■



Mike Benmoschè

Mike Benmoschè is with McNeil & Co., Inc. based in Cortland, NY. You can reach him at m benmosche@mcneilandcompany.com or 607/220-6344.



**Check Out Photos From the
June 24 Mets Game Event
In our Fall Issue!!!**

**You can also visit
nyscwa.com
for a recap!**