

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Takeaway food retailing industry - Heat stress

Hot working conditions in a kitchen (eg caused by ovens or a dishwasher) may lead to heat stress, especially if there is a low level of air movement and poor ventilation.

When working in a hot environment, the body needs to disperse heat more effectively. It does this in two ways - quicker blood circulation and sweating. As sweating drains the body of water and salt, these must be replenished. Otherwise, the loss of water and minerals (salts) will lead to health problems.

A person who is not used to working in hot conditions is more likely to suffer from heat-caused illness than a person who is acclimatized.

When the body cannot disperse heat effectively, the heat may cause the following symptoms:

- headaches, weakness, giddiness, nausea or vomiting
- irritability and making poor decisions
- fainting
- painful muscle cramps
- heat stroke (person may be confused, and may stagger or collapse).

In a hot environment if a person becomes

confused or staggers or collapses it is a medical emergency and an ambulance or doctor should be called. It is possible to die from heat stroke.

Possible solutions

- Install an effective ventilation/extraction system or air-conditioning
- Redesign the kitchen to locate work stations away from heat sources
- Provide, or make sure workers wear, adequate protective clothing to minimise heat stress (eg cotton instead of polyester)
- Provide rest breaks in a cool area for workers who work in hot areas
- Ensure workers have access to fresh, cool drinking water
- Ensure air-conditioning and ventilation systems are serviced on a regular basis
- Train workers about the risks of heat stress.

For more information on heat stress and other workplace health and safety issues call 1300 369 915 or visit

www.worksafe.qld.gov.au

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