



SPECIAL BULLETIN

Working in the Heat

Health risks

Working in hot environments is not safe. Your body builds up heat when you work and sweats to get rid of it. Too much heat can make you tired, hurt your job performance, and increase your chance of injury. You can get skin rash. You can also suffer serious health problems:

- **Dehydration** – When your body loses water, you can't cool off fast enough. You feel thirsty and weak.
- **Cramps** – You can get muscle cramps from the heat even after you leave work.
- **Heat exhaustion** – You feel tired, nauseous, headachy, and giddy (dizzy and silly). Your skin is damp and looks muddy or flushed. You may faint.
- **Heat stroke** – You may have hot dry skin and a high temperature. Or you may feel confused. You may have convulsions or become unconscious. Heat stroke can kill you unless you get emergency medical help.

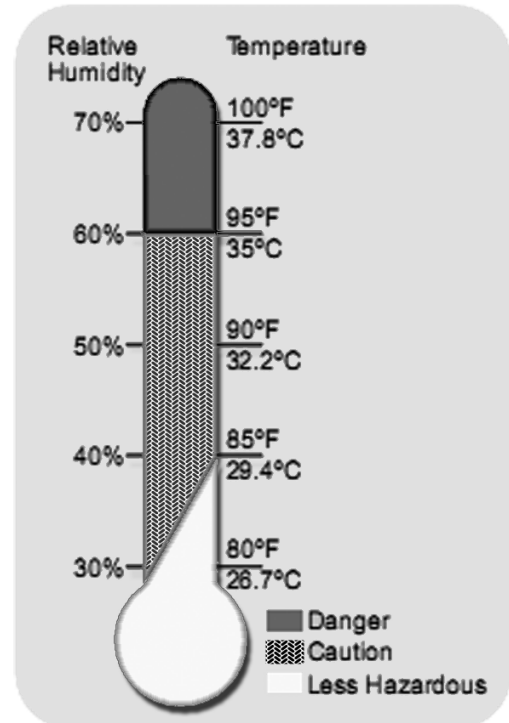
Your risk of heat stress is affected by

- The weather - heat and humidity combined
- How much clothing you have on
- How fast and hard you work
- If you are near a fan or there is a breeze
- If you are in the sun or near hot equipment
- Your physical condition – heat is harder on people who are older, have heart problems or are ill or recovering from illness

When the temperature changes quickly, you need time for your body to get used to the heat. Be extra careful early in the summer and as hot spells begin.

You have a right to a safe & comfortable work environment. That means:

- Clean water provided through a fountain, cooler or bottled water at all locations
- Cool work areas and break rooms
- Ventilation to bring in clean air and take out hot air
- Immediate treatment if you suffer heat stress



OSHA's heat stress equation tells you to be extra cautious above 85°F. Above 95°F in humid weather, you are in the danger zone for heat stress and heat stroke. (OSHA publication 3154 2002)

What to do when it gets hot

- **Drink cool liquids** to replace fluids lost in sweat. Water should be supplied by supervision, from a cooler, a clean fountain or individual bottles if needed.
- **If you feel faint, dizzy or confused**, your supervisor must take you to a cooler area immediately. If there is no supervisor available, get a coworker to accompany you.
- **Take breaks in a cool area when you feel you need it.** Cleaners and others who work in hot areas may need to take a train to cool up. The chart below shows the heat and humidity combinations that require extra cool-off time. But you will need to judge for yourself if you feel stressed by too much heat.
- **Report heat, AC or drinking water problems to supervision.** If the AC in your breakroom or station booth breaks down, your supervisor should immediately provide a fan. NOTE: A fan will not help you if the temperature is above 95° F or is very humid; it just brings the hot air to you.
- **If the problem is not fixed immediately** call your field office and ask to speak to a manager. To follow up, call:
 - Station command center 212-712-5277
 - RTO command 212-712-4480
 - MOW control 212-712-4120

You can reach your TWU department by calling TWU Local 100 at 212-873-6000 during the day. For off-hours safety emergencies call 1-888-898-6608.

What about breaks?

Although there is no set rule on when you need a heat break, OSHA recommends increased breaks using a formula based on temperature, heat from the sun and equipment, humidity, and the work being done. NYCT Office of Systems Safety relies on this to determine whether a work area is too hot.

The table below converts OSHA's guidelines to approximate measurements of humidity and heat. If the temperature and humidity in your work area are higher than shown in the table for the kind of work you do, you need extra breaks to cool off. *This is a guideline, not a strict rule. Whenever you feel weak, dizzy or disoriented it is already too hot!*

Heat and humidity limits for regular work*

Above these limits, or in the sun, extra rest breaks must be provided.		Light work	Moderate work	Heavy work
	Humidity	Temp. °F	Temp. °F	Temp. °F
	80%	90	84	80
	70%	92	86	82
	60%	94	87	84
	50%	97	89	85
	40%	100	92	87
	30%	104	94	90
	WGBT	86	80	77

* Temperature limits for work indoors – based on the WGBT conversion equations produced by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry www.doli.state.mn.us/heatstrs.htm