

Working safely in hot weather

Heat is a hazard - whether you're out on a reserve or estate, surveying wildlife, running an event, leading an outdoor activity, maintaining a building, or driving between sites. Sun, humidity, physical effort, PPE and time pressure all add up. This talk helps everyone recognise the risks early and look after themselves and each other.

Spot the warning signs

Heat exhaustion - cool them down

- Headache, dizziness or feeling faint
- Heavy sweating, pale, clammy skin
- Cramps in arms, legs or stomach
- Feeling sick, fast breathing or pulse
- Tiredness, confusion or irritability

Heat stroke - 999, this is an emergency

- Still unwell 30 mins after cooling
- Hot skin, not sweating, very high temp
- Confusion, slurred speech, seizures
- Loss of responsiveness
- Move to shade, cool aggressively, stay with them

Stay safe through the day

- **Drink water regularly** Little and often, before you feel thirsty. Carry your own supply if you work away from a base.
- **Plan around the heat** Do the heaviest or most exposed work earlier or later; rest in shade during the hottest part of the day (roughly 11am to 3pm).
- **Cover up and protect your skin** Light, loose clothing, a hat, and sunscreen on exposed skin, whatever your skin type. Some people burn faster (paler skin, fair or red hair, freckles or lots of moles), but darker skin can still burn and isn't immune to sun damage — so everyone should cover up. Take breaks somewhere cool or shaded, and watch for any changes to your skin.
- **Know your kit** High-vis, waders, chainsaw or PPE traps heat. Build in extra breaks, and remove or loosen kit safely when you can.
- **Check the forecast and the ground** Watch for heat warnings, raised fire risk on dry sites, and water you may be tempted to cool off in (open water carries cold-shock and other dangers).
- **Lone or remote working** Agree check-ins, carry a charged phone, and make sure someone knows where you are and when you're due back.

Look out for one another

Heat affects people differently, and that's normal. Some of us feel it sooner because of **age, pregnancy, a health condition, a disability, or medication** (some common medicines reduce how well the body handles heat). Newer team members, volunteers and anyone not used to the conditions may also be more at risk. No one should feel awkward asking for water, shade or a break - speak up early, check on quieter colleagues, and adjust the plan without judgement. If you manage others, make it easy to raise concerns and never pressure anyone to push through. If in doubt, stop and cool down.

Behind the wheel?

Vehicles heat up fast. Carry water and drink before you feel thirsty. Use air-con or open windows, take breaks if you feel drowsy, and never start a long drive already overheated. Check tyre pressures in the heat, and **never leave a person, child or animal in a parked vehicle**.

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