



Safety Alert No. 467

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Contact: [bseepublicaffairs@bsee.gov](mailto:bseepublicaffairs@bsee.gov)

Phone: (800) 200-4853

## Heat Advisory – Heat-Related Illnesses Occurring Offshore

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES	
WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO DO
<b>HEAT STROKE</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High body temperature (103°F or higher)</li> <li>Hot, red, dry, or damp skin</li> <li>Fast, strong pulse</li> <li>Headache</li> <li>Dizziness</li> <li>Nausea</li> <li>Confusion</li> <li>Losing consciousness (passing out)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call 911 right away-heat stroke is a medical emergency</li> <li>Move the person to a cooler place</li> <li>Help lower the person's temperature with cool cloths or a cool bath</li> <li>Do not give the person anything to drink</li> </ul>
<b>HEAT EXHAUSTION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heavy sweating</li> <li>Cold, pale, and clammy skin</li> <li>Fast, weak pulse</li> <li>Nausea or vomiting</li> <li>Muscle cramps</li> <li>Tiredness or weakness</li> <li>Dizziness</li> <li>Headache</li> <li>Fainting (passing out)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move to a cool place</li> <li>Loosen your clothes</li> <li>Put cool, wet cloths on your body or take a cool bath</li> <li>Sip water</li> </ul> <p><b>Get medical help right away if:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are throwing up</li> <li>Your symptoms get worse</li> <li>Your symptoms last longer than 1 hour</li> </ul>
<b>HEAT CRAMPS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heavy sweating during intense exercise</li> <li>Muscle pain or spasms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stop physical activity and move to a cool place</li> <li>Drink water or a sports drink</li> <li>Wait for cramps to go away before you do any more physical activity</li> </ul> <p><b>Get medical help right away if:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cramps last longer than 1 hour</li> <li>You're on a low-sodium diet</li> <li>You have heart problems</li> </ul>
<b>SUNBURN</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Painful, red, and warm skin</li> <li>Blisters on the skin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay out of the sun until your sunburn heals</li> <li>Put cool cloths on sunburned areas or take a cool bath</li> <li>Put moisturizing lotion on sunburned areas</li> <li>Do not break blisters</li> </ul>
<b>HEAT RASH</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red clusters of small blisters that look like pimples on the skin (usually on the neck, chest, groin, or in elbow creases)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay in a cool, dry place</li> <li>Keep the rash dry</li> <li>Use powder (like baby powder) to soothe the rash</li> </ul>

Figure 1. [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

There have been multiple recent instances of personnel experiencing symptoms of heat-related illnesses while working offshore. Some examples include:

- An operator noticed a contractor working on a platform experiencing dehydration symptoms. The affected individual was given fluids and told to rest. Out of caution, he was later transported to shore for further evaluation.
- An onsite medic observed signs of severe heat exhaustion in an employee. The employee was treated with IV fluids on board. After consulting with the onshore doctors, the employee was transported in a medevac helicopter to a local emergency room for further medical attention.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines heat exhaustion as “the body’s response to an excessive loss of water and salt, usually through excessive sweating.” They caution heat exhaustion is most likely to affect people with high blood pressure and those **working in a hot environment**.

Typical symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Muscle cramps
- Weakness
- Irritability
- Thirst
- Heavy sweating
- Elevated body temperature

According to the CDC, heat stroke “occurs when the body can no longer control its temperature: the body’s temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down.” The CDC lists the typical symptoms of heat stroke as follows:

- Confusion, altered mental status
- Slurred speech
- Loss of consciousness
- Seizures
- Very high body temperature
- Hot, dry skin or profuse sweating

Heat stroke can be fatal if treatment is delayed.

**BSEE recommends that operators and contractors, where appropriate, consider the following:**

- Advising employees and contractors on the prevention and treatment of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
  - **Preventing** heat exhaustion and heat stroke includes:
    - Drinking plenty of water or a sports drink.
    - Taking breaks in areas with air conditioning or shade to cool off.

- **Heat exhaustion** treatment includes:
  - Providing medical attention to the person showing symptoms.
  - Staying with the employee until medical attention arrives.
  - Removing the employee from the hot area, giving them cool liquids to drink, and encouraging the employee to drink.
  - Removing unnecessary clothing, such as shoes, socks, and jackets.
  - Cooling the worker with cold compresses, or having the employee wash their head, face, and neck with cold water.
  
- **Heat stroke** treatment includes:
  - Providing medical attention to the person showing symptoms.
  - Staying with the employee until medical attention arrives.
  - Moving the worker to a cool, shaded area, and removing unnecessary clothing.
  - Cooling the worker via:
    - Cold water or ice bath (if possible).
    - Wetting the skin.
    - Placing cold wet clothes on the skin.
    - Soaking clothing with cool water.
    - Circulating air around the employee.
  
- Considering implementing work policies requiring periodic breaks when working outside in high temperatures. According to the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), when the heat index is 100°F, a 15-minute break should be taken for each 45 minutes of moderate intensity work. For additional information refer to CDC's [Work/Rest Schedules fact sheet](#).
  
- Exercising Stop Work Authority when necessary.
  
- While conducting a job safety analysis, identifying existing or potential safety, health, and environmental hazards associated with each step and considering using the [OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool application](#).

*Please note: This information was obtained from the CDC and is only as current as the date issued. Please refer to the CDC website at [Heat Stress Related Illness | NIOSH | CDC](#) for the latest information. This information does not substitute professional medical advice or consultations with healthcare professionals.*

– BSEE –

A **Safety Alert** is a tool used by BSEE to inform the offshore oil and gas industry of the circumstances surrounding a potential safety issue. It also contains recommendations that could assist avoiding potential incidents on the Outer Continental Shelf.