

# Employers and employees should take precautions against heat stroke

As the Hong Kong Observatory has issued the Very Hot Weather Warning, the Labour Department (LD) reminds employers and employees to take appropriate precautions to prevent heat stroke when working in a hot or humid environment.

Heat stroke could occur if an employee works in a hot or humid environment for prolonged periods of time, as the body may fail to regulate its temperature by effective heat dissipation through sweating.

The symptoms of heat-related illnesses include feeling thirsty, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, muscle spasm or even mental confusion, and loss of consciousness or convulsion in severe cases.

Construction workers, cleaning workers, kitchen workers and porters, for example, are more prone to heat stroke as they may be working for long hours in such an environment, especially if appropriate preventive measures have not been taken.

The LD reminds employers to arrange for a suitable assessment of the risk of heat stress in the work environment and take appropriate preventive measures. The LD has produced two leaflets entitled "Checklist for Heat Stress Assessment at Construction Sites" and "Checklist for Heat Stress Assessment at Outdoor Cleansing Workplaces" respectively. Employers engaged in construction or outdoor cleaning work are advised to refer to these checklists in assessing the risk of heat stress at their workplaces. As for heat stress assessment at a workplace in general, employers can refer to a booklet entitled "Risk Assessment for the Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work" produced by the LD.

The LD also reminds employers and employees to take the following precautions to prevent heat stroke:

## Employers

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- (1) Take heed of the weather report and adopt shift work arrangements for employees to reduce their exposure to the hot environment, or arrange appropriate rest breaks for them during very hot periods;
- (2) Avoid working under direct sunlight and set up temporary sunshade wherever possible;
- (3) Provide cool potable water for employees at all times during work. If necessary, provide drinks containing electrolytes for employees to replenish loss of salt during profuse sweating;
- (4) Minimise physical demands by using tools or mechanical aids at work;
- (5) Increase air flow by enhancing ventilation or air-conditioning as appropriate;
- (6) Isolate heat-generating facilities at the workplace and use insulating

materials to minimise heat dissipation to the other work areas; and  
(7) Provide relevant information and training for employees on heat stroke such as preventive measures and first aid treatment.

## Employees

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- (1) Wear clothing made of suitable materials (for example, cotton) that is loose-fitting and light-coloured to help heat dissipation, minimise heat absorption and allow sweat evaporation;
- (2) Wear a wide-brimmed hat when working outdoors;
- (3) Drink plenty of water or other appropriate beverages with electrolytes to replenish the fluids and salt lost through sweating; and
- (4) Whenever there are any symptoms of heat-related illnesses, rest in a cool or shady place and drink water, and inform supervisors to take appropriate actions immediately.

Some employees may have difficulty in adapting to a hot working environment owing to their own health conditions. Employers should take this into account and consider the recommendations of their doctors when assigning work to these employees.

In addition to the publications on risk assessment, the LD has produced a leaflet entitled "Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work in a Hot Environment" for the public. The publications can be obtained free of charge from the offices of the Occupational Health Service of the LD, or downloaded from the department's webpage at [www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/content2\\_9.htm](http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/content2_9.htm).

The LD organises occupational health talks in public places and at its own training venues regularly to raise employers' and employees' awareness of occupational health. Details of health talks on the prevention of heat stroke at work in a hot environment from July to September are as follows:

### (A)

Dates: July 7 and 27; August 7, 13 and 28; and September 7 and 18 (am);

July 20 and 29; August 4, 10 and 20; and September 3, 14 and 24 (pm)

Time: Half-day

Venue: Occupational Safety and Health Training Centre of the Labour Department, 13/F, Kolour·Tsuen Wan I, 68 Chung On Street, Tsuen Wan, New Territories

### (B)

Dates: July 6 and 24 and August 4 and 20 (am)

Time: Half-day

Venue: Occupational Safety and Health Centre of the Labour Department, G/F, Kwun Tong Community Health Centre Building, 60 Hip Wo Street, Kwun Tong (MTR Kwun Tong Station Exit A1)

### (C)

Date: July 20 and August 3

Time: 3pm to 4.30pm

Venue: Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum, 10 Salisbury Road,  
Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon (MTR Tsim Sha Tsui Station Exit E)

(Taking into account the latest epidemic development, relevant infection control measures are adopted in different venues of health talks.)

For enrolment or enquiries about these occupational health talks, please call 2852 4040 or 2361 8240 (for talks organised at the Occupational Safety and Health Centre). Moreover, the LD also provides an outreach health education service and occupational health nurses will, on invitation, disseminate occupational health information at workplaces at a convenient time. Please contact the nursing officer at 2852 4062 for details. All these health talks are free of charge.

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## CHP reminds public on precautions against heat stroke during very hot weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (July 6) reminded members of the public, particularly those undertaking outdoor activities, to take heed of necessary measures against heat stroke and sunburn in very hot weather.

"The public should carry and drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration while engaging in outdoor activities," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Those engaged in strenuous outdoor activities should avoid beverages containing caffeine, such as coffee and tea, as well as alcohol, as they speed up water loss through the urinary system," the spokesman explained.

"The obese, the sick, including those with heart disease or high blood pressure, the old and the young are more vulnerable to heat-related illnesses. They should pay special attention," the spokesman added.

The public should adopt the following precautions:

- Wear loose and light-coloured clothing to reduce heat absorption and facilitate sweat evaporation and heat dissipation;
- Avoid vigorous exercise and prolonged activities like hiking or trekking as heat, sweating and exhaustion can place additional demands on the physique;
- Perform outdoor activities in the morning or late afternoon;
- For indoor activities, open all windows, use a fan or use air-

- conditioning to maintain good ventilation; and
- Reschedule work to cooler times of the day.

If working in a hot environment is inevitable, introduce shade in the workplace where practicable. Start work slowly and pick up the pace gradually. Move to a cool area for rest at regular intervals to allow the body to recuperate.

The public should also note the latest and the forecast Ultraviolet (UV) Index released by the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO). When the UV Index is high (6 or above):

- Minimise direct exposure of the skin and the eyes to sunlight;
- Wear long-sleeved and loose-fitting clothes;
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat or use an umbrella;
- Seek a shaded area or put on UV-blocking sunglasses;
- Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen lotion with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or above. Apply liberally and reapply after swimming, sweating or toweling off; and
- While using DEET-containing insect repellents for personal protection against mosquito-borne diseases, apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent.

If symptoms develop, such as dizziness, headache, nausea, shortness of breath or confusion, rest and seek help immediately, and seek medical advice as soon as possible.

The public may obtain more information from the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111), [heat stroke](#) page and [UV radiation](#) page; the HKO's Dial-a-Weather (1878 200), latest [weather and forecast](#), [UV Index](#) and weather information for [hiking and mountaineering](#); and [press releases](#) of the Labour Department on precautions against heat stroke for outdoor workers and their employers when the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force.

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## Assess the risk of heat stroke to employees

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following special announcement immediately, and repeat it at frequent intervals when the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force:

The Labour Department reminds employers that as the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force, they should assess the risk of heat stroke to their

employees and adopt effective preventive measures such as providing cool drinking water, setting up temporary sunshade and providing mechanical aids to reduce physical exertion of employees. Employees should drink water regularly and be mindful of their physical condition. If early heat stroke symptoms such as headache and thirst appear, they should rest in a cool or shady place and drink water immediately. They should also inform their supervisors to take appropriate actions.

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## **Very Hot Weather Warning issued**

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

The Hong Kong Observatory has issued the Very Hot Weather Warning.

To prevent heat stroke, avoid prolonged activities outdoors.

If engaged in outdoor work or activities, wear a wide-brimmed hat and light-coloured, loose-fitting clothes. Stay in shaded areas as much as possible.

Drink plenty of water, and avoid beverages containing caffeine or alcohol.

If you feel sick, consult a doctor right away.

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## **Fanling Swimming Pool to reopen**

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (July 5) that Fanling Swimming Pool in North District, closed earlier on due to water pipe burst, will be reopened at 6.30am tomorrow (July 6).