



WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH NOTICE (WSHN)

TOPIC HEAT STRESS PRECAUTION IN THE WORKPLACE			Reference Number: 2023/WSHN/04
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The Safety, Health, and Environment National Authority (SHENA) would like to remind all principals, employers, occupiers, self-employed persons, and persons at work to be aware of incidences that can occur due to heat stress and take the necessary precautions to avoid heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke incident in the workplace.

The phenomenon of climate change has not excluded Brunei Darussalam from the rising temperatures experienced by many countries around the world. According to the press release of the Brunei Darussalam Meteorological Department, Ministry of Transport and Info-communications on 12 May 2023, dry and hot weather conditions are expected to occur in the coming months with possible increase in daily maximum temperatures reaching 34°C or more in the afternoon, which will also potentially lead to El-Nino occurrence.

SHENA would like to highlight that working in hot and dry weather can put workers (especially outdoors) at higher risk to heat stress. Heat stress is a condition in which the body is unable to remove excess body heat where this excess accumulated heat harms the body that ranges from mild in the form of heat rash, heat cramps and heat exhaustion to permanent damage of vital organs that can lead to fatal heat stroke, if not treated immediately. These illnesses induce symptoms such as sweating, dizziness, fatigue, elevated blood pressure and heart rate, all of which impair workers' performance.

Section 12 of the [Workplace Safety and Health Order, 2009](#) generally places a duty on employers to take reasonably practicable measures to ensure the health and safety of their employees when at work. Additionally, Regulation 10 of the [Workplace Safety and Health \(General Provisions\), 2014](#), places the duty of an occupier of a workplace to take all reasonably practicable measures to ensure that persons at work in the workplace are protected from excessive heat.

Some of the advisories to employers, principals and occupiers that can help reduce the risk of heat stress to employees include, but not limited to the following:

- Ensure that **employees are adequately acclimatized to the hot weather/ working conditions** by applying strategies of gradual adaptation to working under hot condition in which daily but measured exposure to the heat is one of them. Employers must be mindful to avoid placing employees at high risk of heat stress to work in hot environments for extended periods. The high-risk employees range from workers who are:
 - New to working in warm environments.
 - Unwell or on medication.
 - Returning from a long break or injury / illness.

- **Re-schedule heavy physical work under the sun to the cooler parts of the day** (early morning or late afternoon) as reasonably practicable. Alternatively, employees may be rotated more regularly to limit their exposure to intense outdoor heat.

- **Encourage employees to practice a buddy system** where a work activity can be conducted by a minimum of two persons where they are able to observe each other for signs and symptoms of heat stress.

- **Perform a risk assessment** that addresses working in a hot environment (indoors/outdoors) and work activities which produce excessive heat that can severely increase the risk of heat-related illnesses. This is underlined by the Workplace Safety and Health (Risk Management) Regulations, 2014 where employers, self-employed persons, and principals are required to undertake a risk assessment particular on activities relating to safety and health risks.

- **Provide flexible rest breaks away from heat** in cool shaded areas or air-conditioned rooms / buildings.

- **Provide employees with adequate cool drinking water** at convenient and accessible locations.

- **Educate** by encouraging employees to:
 - Keep themselves **always hydrated** by drinking sufficient clean water.
 - **Recognize early symptoms** of heat-related disorders.
 - **Identify the risks and control measures** that can prevent and minimize heat-related illnesses or injuries.

- **Provide emergency preparedness plans and recovery measures** as in immediate first aid treatment for employees suspected of suffering the effect of overexposure to heat.

- **Provide adequate ventilation** such as air conditioning or fans for employees who are working in hot indoor environments to control the heat intensity and humidity level.

- **Reassess the existing work processes / safe work procedures**, if required, and consider providing additional mechanical aid that may reduce employee workload which in turn reduce the production of metabolic heat. An example would be using conveyer belts for the transportation of materials from one point to another as part of the work process.
- **Encourage employees to wear loose-fitting and light-coloured clothing** as these types of clothing can help minimize risk of heat illness. Personal Protective Equipment should be, as much as possible, lightweight to reduce workload on the body.
- **Ensure appointed first aiders in the workplace are prepared** to give first aid, when necessary.

Employers and medical practitioners are also reminded to report work-related heat stroke cases (after the diagnoses by a medical practitioner) to SHENA by clicking “Report an Incident” button on SHENA website, www.shena.gov.bn

Further clarification concerning this Notice can be obtained by submitting your general enquiries <https://shena.gov.bn/contact/general-enquiries>. SHENA would like to thank all stakeholders for their cooperation in ensuring Brunei Darussalam is a safe place to work and live.

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