Work Safely

The hot summer months here in Charleston pose special hazards for outdoor workers. Overexposure to the sun can damage the skin and lead to skin cancer. Overexertion in the heat can cause heat stroke, heat exhaustion, or heat cramps. Everyone who spends time outside must learn to protect themselves against heat and sun exposure.

Engineering & Facilities

97 Jonathan Lucas Street
PO Box 250190
Charleston, SC 29425
Phone: (843) 792-2721
www.academicdepartments.musc.edu/vpfa/eandf

Contact Tom at thurmant@musc.edu
**Protect Yourself**

Here are some ways to protect yourself from heat related injury and sun damage:

- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to keep your head and face cool. This also provides extra protection from sun exposure. Baseball caps only protect the face, leaving your ears and neck exposed.
- Wear a light colored, loose fitting, long-sleeved shirt.
- Wear UV-absorbent sunglasses.
- Wear a water resistant sunscreen that has an SPF of at least 30 and reapply every two hours.
- Carry water and take drinks frequently, at least every 15 minutes.
- Minimize heavy exertion during the hottest time of the day (between 11AM and 3PM). If you must work at that time, take frequent breaks in the shade or in a cool environment.
- Allow yourself to adjust gradually to the heat. This adjustment usually takes about 5 to 7 days. Start with a short period of time outside and increase the amount slowly each day.

**Identify and Treat**

There are three major heat related disorders, heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and heat cramps. Here’s how to identify and treat them:

**Heat Cramps** are painful muscle spasms. They are generally caused by salt loss in people who sweat profusely and drink a lot of water. Cramps may occur while working or within several hours after. If you experience heat cramps, rest and cool down and drink clear juice or an electrolyte-containing sports drink. If cramps persist for more than an hour, call your doctor.

**Heat Exhaustion** leads to heat stroke. Someone suffering heat exhaustion will experience extreme weakness or fatigue, giddiness, nausea, or headache. In more serious cases, the victim may vomit or lose consciousness. They will be clammy and pale or flushed. If you suspect someone is suffering from heat exhaustion, move them to a cool place and encourage them to drink plenty of water. Mild cases will improve quickly; more severe cases may require care for a few days.

**Heat Stroke** is the most serious heat related disorder. Someone suffering heat stroke will stop perspiring. They will have hot skin that may be dry, red or spotted and body temperature higher than 105°F. They may be confused, delirious, in convulsions, or unconscious. Unless quick and appropriate treatment is provided, death can occur. If you suspect someone is suffering from heat stroke, move them to a cool environment, soak their clothes with water, encourage them to drink water, and call 911.

**For More Information:**


OSHA Protecting Yourself Against Heat Stress: [www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3154.html](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3154.html)

OSHA Protecting Yourself in the Sun: [www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3166/osha3166.html](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3166/osha3166.html)