**SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY:HEAT ILLNESS PREVENTION**

**by Don Milani, ACL Safety Director**

It is that time of year again. The winter may be over for now and the weather is starting to warm up. Now is the time to review and update your Heat Illness Prevention Program.

I attended a seminar sponsored by State Fund with speakers from CAL/OSHA consultation and received some updated information about the requirements.

In 2009, CAL/OSHA issued 1158 citations for violations of the Heat Illness Prevention program. The fines totaled about $2,000,000.00.

There were sixteen jobsites shut down because they were not in compliance with the Heat Illness Prevention Program. Yes, CAL/OSHA has the power to shut down your operations if there is an immediate threat to the health and safety of your employees.

In 2009 there were 41 confirmed heat illnesses and 1 confirmed fatality in California. This is down from previous years.

Your program must cover the following four requirements:

Access to Water

Employees must have access to water. The employer is to provide at least one quart of water per employee per hour that they will be on the jobsite. The water must be as close as practicable to the employees. To follow the requirements to the letter an employee who will be working away from the landing all day must carry the required water with them. Someone who is to work eight hours must start the day with two gallons of water, if they are working ten hours, they must have two and one half gallons at the start of the day. If employees are drinking from the same water source, such as an Igloo, you must provide single use cups. The water is supposed to be cool and CAL/OSHA *suggests* that during times when the temperature is over 90, ice be added. You are to encourage your employees to drink water throughout the day. You should also encourage your employees to start drinking water before they come to work and continue to drink water after they get home.

Access to Shade

If you are working in temperatures of 85 to 90 and the employees do not have access to shade, you risk a serious citation. If you are working in temperatures above 90, and the employees do not have access to shade, you risk being shut down. Shade means an area where there is no sunlight. If you are using a tree for shade and a shadow can be seen, it is not shade. If there is no natural shade, you must us artificial shade. This can be anything such as an umbrella or pop up canopy. The shade has to be within a five minute walk and you must have enough shade that 25% of your employees can be under it at the same time. Employees must be allowed to sit in the shade for a five minute break when they feel they need to cool down.

Written Procedures

You must have a written program detailing how you are going to accomplish your program. The subjects that need to be addressed include: how you will provide access to water and shade, how you will monitor the weather, institute high heat procedures and address lack of acclimatization, train all employees and supervisors, respond to heat illnesses without delay, provide first aid and emergency services, and provide clear and precise directions to the worksite.

High heat procedures kick in when the temperature reaches 95 or above. High heat procedures must include these steps: ensure effective communication (by voice, observation or electronic means), observe employees for alertness and signs and symptoms of heat illness, give more frequent reminders to drink plenty of water, and closely supervise new employees and all workers during a heat wave.

Training

All employees must be trained to recognize heat illness and the steps to prevent it, or how to treat themselves or co-workers who are suffering from heat illness. This is important with new employees. Eighty percent of all heat illness incidents happened to employees with less then four days employment.

Supervisors need additional training. In all fatalities from heat illness in the last few years, the supervisor did not receive additional training. They need to be trained in the risk factors for heat illness, recognizing the signs and symptoms, getting immediate help when needed, checking the weather daily and emergency procedures.

Heat Illness is very serious. People who go into full heat stroke in the field, usually die. Do not take this lightly; it could be the difference between life and death for your employees.

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