

No. 142/25 - TUC HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATES & HEAT GUIDANCE

10th July 2025

To: All Branches

TUC Health & Safety updates & heat guidance

TUC week of action

Next week: 14th – 20th July, the TUC are inviting union health and safety reps to inspect their workplace temperatures during a week of action. The TUC have been providing free thermometers to trade union safety representatives. A total of 65 CWU Health and Safety Reps have received these free TUC thermometers so far. It is currently predicted that the UK could be hit with another heatwave starting as soon as 12th July.

Heatwaves are defined by the Met Office as periods of at least three consecutive days in which a temperature threshold is met or exceeded.

[What is a heatwave? - Met Office](#)

Heat periods are defined by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) as at least one day with an amber heat-health alert in at least one region and/or the mean central England temperature being at least 20°C.

The CWU are fully supportive of the TUC's recent call for a specific legal maximum temperature for indoor work of 30°C, or 27°C for strenuous work, and have been attending meetings with the TUC, HSE and other trade unions to discuss much needed changes to the Workplace Health Safety & Welfare Regulations of 1992 regarding working temperature and HSE risk guidance.

New and updated working temperature risk guidance is urgently needed, especially given that the Health and Safety Executive say 4,500 people are diagnosed with skin cancer every year because of outdoor work. Heat illness is a risk that many workers are not fully aware of.

The CWU guide attached to this LTB explains heat illness in more detail and includes embedded QR codes which directly link to NHS and World Health Organisation hot weather guidance.

While red and amber weather alerts naturally grab attention due to increased media coverage, **yellow alerts are still significant**. They signal that the weather could have a real impact, especially on those who are more vulnerable and may be at increased risk in extreme heat due to age, or underlying health conditions. Colleagues who are pregnant or colleagues taking certain medications will also be at increased risk. For example, tricyclic antidepressants (e.g. Amitriptyline, Nortriptyline), and SSRIs (e.g. Sertraline, Fluoxetine), can **interfere with the body's thermoregulation**, they can reduce a person's ability to sweat, which is essential for cooling down in hot weather.

Colleagues are reminded that workers are protected under Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, allowing them to remove themselves from situations where they reasonably believe there is a serious and imminent danger. It is important to note however that this protection is limited to specific immediate risks to safety and **not** general discomfort. If prevailing circumstances do represent a real risk of “serious and imminent danger” colleagues should aim to seek immediate advice from their local CWU representatives before using rights under Section 44 and speak urgently to your line manager/employer. Protection under Section 44 is an **individual choice** and not a collective choice, although representations can be made for whole groups of workers where higher UK temperatures and specific hot weather risks are more prevalent.

For pregnant workers specific health and safety requirements relating to new and expectant mothers at work are mainly contained in Regulations 16 to 18 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999. If any risk cannot be removed employers must take the following actions:

- **Action 1** - Temporarily adjust her working conditions and/or hours of work; or if that is not possible,
- **Action 2** - Offer her suitable alternative work (at the same rate of pay) if available, or if that is not feasible,
- **Action 3** - Suspend her from work on paid leave for as long as necessary, to protect her health and safety, and that of her child.

TUC publications

An updated version of the Safety Reps and Safety Committees' Regulations 1977 (commonly known as the Safety **Reps 'brown book'**) contains regulations, codes of practice and guidance, it is now available to pre-order from the TUC. This new book has been redesigned for easier navigation and comprehension, making it a more practical resource for trade union safety representatives. The new edition incorporates both the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees' Regulations 1977 and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996, ensuring comprehensive guidance on worker consultation. Single copies cost £7 and are available from tuceducation@tuc.org.uk.

The brown book provides the legal backing that union safety representatives need to confidently address health and safety issues in the workplace. It is indeed the essential tool for Safety Reps and the updated version is designed to equip every representative with the knowledge and evidence necessary to effectively perform their role.

The TUC hazards book version 7 is now also available to pre order from the TUC, the book is currently in print and will be a popular and valuable book for branches and regions to order, this book is the 5-year updated version and available as a single copy for £25 or with discounts for larger orders above 6 copies: [Hazards at Work 7th Edition - Coming Soon! Pre order | TUC](#)

Both TUC publications detailed above are seen as valuable resources for CWU Reps and branches.

This LTB is shared on behalf of CWU Central Services.

If you have any questions or need any further information, please contact -

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HEAT ILLNESS GUIDE

FOR CWU MEMBERS

KEY FACT: HEAT ILLNESS HAPPENS IN THE UK AS WELL AS IN WARM CLIMATES.

Heat illness or heat related injury can cause a lot of damage and in some cases heat illness can be fatal.

DEFINITION OF HEAT ILLNESS

Heat Illness refers to a spectrum of disorders caused by environmental conditions whereby individuals become quickly unwell because of a rise in core body temperature.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

- 1 Heat illness happens when a body gains more heat than it loses.
- 2 Our body temperature rises when working or exercising or undertaking any manual activity during any increase in air temperature, or when in direct sunshine or when heat amplification occurs by reflecting off buildings and other surfaces. Heat amplification can often occur in vehicles too.
- 3 Heat is normally lost mainly by sweating. Usually, this helps the body to cool down and continue to function efficiently. In humid conditions, sweating doesn't work as well, and if too many clothes (or the wrong sort of clothes) are worn the body may keep in more heat than it should.
- 4 If more heat is gained than lost, our body temperature rises too much, which may lead to heat illness. HEAT STORAGE = HEAT GAINED – HEAT LOST
- 5 Risk Factors – You are at greater risk of heat illness if you are: • Tired • Hungry • Thirsty (dehydrated) • Or if identified as a vulnerable person due to another health condition.
- 6 An individual should be presumed to have heat illness if they experience or display any of the following: • Agitation • Nausea or vomiting • Cramps • Dizziness.
- 7 Worsening signs of heat illness include staggering, loss of coordination, collapse, loss of consciousness.
- 8 Where heat illness signs exist, STOP activity and seek medical assistance.

RISK BEHAVIOURS TO AVOID

DO NOT ignore any warning signs, if you or someone else you know or are working with start to display early signs of heat injury or heat illness you can call 111 to seek immediate guidance and advice or immediately call 999 if urgent First Aid is required.

DO NOT restrict water intake, even if you have limited access to toilet facilities you should still drink enough water to stay hydrated and return to work to use the toilet as required. Dehydration can be mild, moderate or severe depending on how much water your body is lacking, an early symptom to look out for is thirst.

DO NOT directly seek the sun, this is dangerous especially during physical work activity, seeking shade wherever possible can reduce how hot a person feels by more than 10°C

FURTHER GUIDANCE CAN BE FOUND BY SCANNING THE QR CODES BELOW:

X @DaveWardGS f The Communications Union

X @CWUNews #TheCWU CWU.ORG

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CWU
The communications union

NHS



 **World Health Organization**



ENJOY THE SUN BUT BEWARE:

Skin cancer kills – 70,000 new cases are reported every year in the UK and 2,000 people die every year in the UK.

FACT: Brown or black skinned people rarely get skin cancer, however they should still take care.

FACT: The sun also causes thickening of the skin leading to premature ageing and wrinkles.

FACT: Too much sun can cause heat exhaustion and sun stroke – both need urgent treatment.

WARNING
SUNBURN CAN DOUBLE
YOUR RISK OF
SKIN CANCER

PROTECT YOURSELF WITH THE 'SUN SMART' SAFETY CODE:

1. Cover up with loose cool clothing to keep the sun off your skin. Wear a hat, preferably with a wide brim and sunglasses.

2. Seek shade whenever possible, during your breaks, especially during the hottest part of the day, from 11am to 3pm.

3. Use a sunscreen SPF 30 or higher on any exposed skin. Use it half an hour before going outside and reapply it frequently.

4. Drink plenty of water regularly, to avoid dehydration. It should be drunk before you get to the stage of feeling thirsty.

5. Be 'Skin Safe' early treatment is important. Report mole changes (size, shape, colour, itching or bleeding) to your doctor.



The communications union

BE SUN SMART & SKIN SAFE

Every year 2,000 people in the UK die from skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the second most common cancer in the UK.

The number of new skin cancer cases increases every year and has doubled in the past 20 years.

The cause of skin cancer is nearly always over exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun or a sunbed.

There is nothing healthy about a suntan. Your skin darkens because it has been damaged.

You can still get sunburnt through light cloud.

Most cases of skin cancer could be easily prevented.

Sunburn causes permanent damage, the visible burns may heal but it increases your risk of skin cancer in later years.

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Temperature Inspection - Checklist for Safety Reps

Question	Notes
<p>What is the temperature in the work site?</p> <p>Does temperature vary a lot from room to room, or site to site?</p> <p>Does the workplace temperature change during a normal working day?</p> <p>Do workers have access to thermometers to regularly monitor their own environments, including in vehicles?</p>	
<p>Is there a heat source in the work site, for example machinery?</p> <p>Are windows a significant heat source?</p> <p>Can breaks be taken away from hot areas?</p>	
<p>Are uniform or dress codes relaxed when temperatures reach a certain level?</p> <p>If PPE is required, are workers wearing personal protective equipment that allows air to flow through?</p> <p>Can workers make changes to their clothing/PPE in response to high or low temperatures?</p> <p>Are those working in view of sunlight provided with UV protection, i.e. SPF of at least factor 30?</p> <p>Is protective clothing provided for outdoor workers?</p> <p>Are workers permitted to wear sunglasses or tinted goggles while working outside?</p>	

Is there sufficient air flow and, if fans are being used, adequate ventilation?	
What is the level of work intensity, and do some tasks (e.g. strenuous physical labour) require a cooler temperature?	
<p>Does the employers' risk assessment account for working temperature, and does it recognise a point where it would be too hot to work?</p> <p>Does the employer have:</p> <p>An emergency risk assessment or plan for severe heatwaves?</p> <p>A temperature control failure plan?</p> <p>Have older workers, or those with underlying health conditions, pregnancy or menopause had adjustments considered?</p>	
<p>Does the employer have:</p> <p>An emergency risk assessment or plan for severe heatwaves?</p> <p>A temperature control failure plan?</p>	
<p>Can workers control the temperature of their working environment?</p> <p>Can workers control the temperature of different areas of the workplace separately?</p> <p>Are there clear lines of reporting when workers become concerned about temperatures?</p> <p>Are workers well informed about identifying heat stress, heat stroke, and their right to withdraw from the workplace under Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act?</p>	

<p>Are any air conditioning units working and serviced at least annually?</p> <p>Do all company vehicles have heating and air conditioning controls?</p> <p>Are plans in place to take vehicles without aircon out of use once temperatures reach a certain level?</p>	
<p>In outdoor worksites, is there a plan for shaded areas of canopies to protect workers from the sun during hot weather?</p> <p>Is provision made for work to move to shaded/air-conditioned/cooler areas on hot days?</p> <p>Is provision made for outdoor work to be avoided or shifted to cooler times during the hottest parts of the day/year?</p>	
<p>Do workers have access to cool drinking water on hot days/in hot conditions?</p> <p>Are electrolyte replacement supplements provided to those working strenuous or outdoor jobs which are likely to cause excessive sweating?</p>	
<p>Is provision made to allow workers to take more breaks during very hot weather?</p> <p>Has the employer made consideration of the journey to and from the workplace during a heatwave?</p> <p>Is there a policy in place to suspend outdoor work during the hottest hours of the day, or cease work altogether at a certain temperature?</p>	
<p>Are workers who are consistently working in excessive heat indoors or out subject to regular health screenings?</p>	