

MEDIA ADVISORY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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California Officials Stress the Importance of Safe Working Conditions as the State Faces More Days of Excessive Heat

SACRAMENTO - As the midway point in the current period of extremely hot weather in Southern California and the hottest days forecast for Northern California approach, state officials urge companies employing people who work outdoors to make sure working conditions are safe.

"As hot as it's been in many areas of Southern California the past few days, forecasters at the National Weather Service say we are in store for at least a few more days with temperatures that are 10 to 20 degrees higher than normal for this time of year and that today and tomorrow will be the hottest days for Northern California," said Cal OES Director Mark Ghilarducci.

Cal OES and its partner agencies continue to implement actions outlined under the "Heat Alert" phase of the state's *Contingency Plan for Excessive Heat Emergencies*.

"We continue to work closely with our local, state and federal partners, including the National Weather Service, to make sure everyone is aware of the weather conditions throughout California and prepared to support any requests for resources and assistance from local agencies serving the affected communities," said Ghilarducci.

Ghilarducci and Christine Baker, Director of the California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), emphasized the importance for all employers, particularly those with people working outdoors during the hottest periods of the day, to make workers' safety their top priority.

"It's essential that all employers with outdoor workers continue to ensure that their employees have a safe working environment by providing rest periods, water and shade during periods of extremely hot weather," said Baker.

Representatives from DIR's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) "will remain out in force and make sure employers are complying with state heat illness prevention regulations," said Cal/OSHA Chief Ellen Widess. "Employers should take steps to acclimatize their workers to the excessive heat conditions."

Under current California law, all employers with outdoor workers must take the following actions to ensure the health and safety of employees who work outdoors:

- Train all employees and supervisors about heat illness prevention before work begins.
- Provide plenty of cool, fresh water and encourage employees to drink water frequently.
- Provide a readily accessible shaded area for workers to take a cool down recovery break, and provide rest breaks when workers request them.
- Ensure that workers are given enough time to adjust, or "acclimatize" to the heat. This is especially important for new workers and for all workers during a sudden heat wave. This step can mean the difference between life and death.
- Prepare an emergency heat illness prevention plan for the worksite, with training for supervisors and workers on the steps to take if a worker shows signs or symptoms of heat illness.

Because workers are at higher risk of heat-related illness when the temperature reaches 95 degrees, employers and supervisors are also required to implement the special "High Heat" procedures:

- Observe workers for signs and symptoms of heat illness.
- Remind workers to drink water frequently.
- Provide close supervision of workers in the first 14 days of their employment (to ensure acclimatization).
- Have effective communications systems in place to be able to summon emergency assistance if necessary.
- Ensure effective emergency procedures in place in case workers become ill.
- Employers may want to adjust work schedules to avoid the peak heat times of the day. In all cases, employers need to be extremely vigilant.

Additional information on preparing for heat-related emergencies is available at:

- <http://www.calema.ca.gov/PlanningandPreparedness/Pages/Heat.aspx>
- <http://www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov/beinformed/naturaldisasters/extremeheat/Pages/ExtremeHeat.aspx>
- <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/HeatIllnessInfo.html>

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