

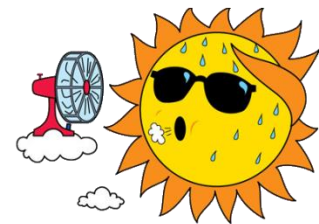
Protect Forklift Operators from Heat Stress

With another scorching Australian summer upon us, it's extremely important that employers and employees are aware of the dangers of heat stress. Workers who are exposed to extreme heat or work in hot environments (both indoor and outdoor) may be at risk of heat stress, and that includes forklift operators, who often perform long shifts in these conditions.

WorkCover NSW defines heat stress and heat illness as "a range of potentially harmful medical conditions that can happen when the body is unable to cope with working in heat." These include heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat rash, and heat stroke.

Heat stress occurs when the body cannot sufficiently cool itself. Factors that contribute to this include:

- air temperature
- humidity (in the environment or workplaces such as laundries and mines)
- radiant heat (from the sun or other sources such as furnaces and ovens)
- air movement or wind speed
- workload (nature of the work and duration)
- physical fitness of the worker (including acclimatisation and any pre-existing conditions e.g. overweight, heart/ circulatory diseases, skin diseases or use of certain medicines)
- clothing (including protective clothing such as overalls)



Signs and symptoms of heat illness include feeling sick, nauseous, dizzy or weak. Clumsiness, collapse and convulsions may also be experienced as a result of heat illness. Some of the measures suggested by WorkCover NSW to minimise the danger of heat stress include:

- rescheduling work so the hot tasks are performed during the cooler part of the day
- wearing light clothing that still provides adequate protection
- arranging for more workers to do the job
- providing extra rest breaks in a cool area
- using mechanical aids to reduce physical exertion
- providing personal protective equipment (PPE)
- providing for frequent short water breaks at regular intervals during the shift e.g. a cup of water every 15–20 minutes
- providing workers with information, instruction and training on recognising heat-related illness

MLA Holdings can provide further protection from heat stress for forklift operators. Many of Mitsubishi's forklifts can be supplied with fully enclosed air-conditioned cabins. Mitsubishi also offer the option of having heavy duty dash fans installed on all of its forklifts.

Information for this article was sourced from www.workcover.nsw.gov.au. For further forklift safety information contact MLA Holdings on 131 652 or www.mlaholdings.com.au.