



HEAT-RELATED HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Even though heat-related deaths are preventable, about 658 people succumb to extreme heat each year in the United States.¹ This loss of life is in addition to the many individuals who suffer from heat-related illness.

Heat-related illness can be prevented by knowing who is at risk. Many believe that heat-related illness is only experienced by the elderly or those with underlying medical conditions. Law enforcement personnel are also at risk, often tasked with working outdoors for extended periods performing difficult or stressful tasks while wearing body armor. Such unique duties and equipment can put even the healthiest law enforcement officers at risk. As many parts of the region are experiencing steady hot and humid temperatures, this is a critical time to remind officers of their heat-related vulnerabilities and actions they may take to protect themselves and others. Such considerations include:

Conduct roll call discussions of heat-related issues, which may include:

- Reminding officers to stay sufficiently hydrated even well before the start of a shift.
- Being prepared for water-related incidents. Prolonged periods of excessive heat may increase the likelihood of emergencies in and around bodies of water. They may include people who are not fully aware of such dangers or lack the necessary skills.
- Reinforce the need for body armor and review agency policies regarding mandatory wear.
- Discuss how officers can recognize the dangers of heat-related illness for themselves, one another, and civilians.
- Review how officers can request assistance if they or a fellow officer are at risk of becoming adversely affected by the heat. Reinforce the message and ensure officers that they will not be criticized when they ask for help with heat exposure-related symptoms.
- Review the importance of rotating personnel from duties where they may be most vulnerable to heat-related illness. Example: directing traffic, bicycle patrol, and foot patrol assignments.

Additional Considerations and Resources:

- United States Department of Labor, Occupational Health and Safety Administration, [Heat Illness Prevention](#). This resource includes general information regarding heat-related illness, employer's responsibility, a training video addressing the dangers of heat exposure, and many more resources.
- [OSHA – National Emphasis Program on Outdoor and Indoor Heat Hazards.](#)
- [MEL Safety Institute - Heat-Related Illness Best Practices](#)
- [MEL Safety Institute – What Outdoor Workers Need to Know About Sunglasses](#)

Please contact your Law Enforcement Risk Control Consultant if you have any questions.

¹Centers for Disease Control. (2022, July 19). *Centers for Disease Control*. Retrieved from Heat-Related Illness: https://www.cdc.gov/pictureofamerica/pdfs/picture_of_america_heat-related_illness.pdf