

The Compliance Division of KY OSH might issue citations to employers who fail to protect workers from heat stress, because presumably it believes employers have a duty under KRS 338.031 to protect workers from heat stress.

## KOSH Program Stresses Heat Stress

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In the current issue of the Kentucky Labor Cabinet's "Labor Works" newsletter, the Cabinet announced that it has joined in federal OSHA's campaign to educate employers and employees about the hazards of working outdoors in the summer heat, along with steps needed to prevent heat-related illnesses.

As part of the campaign, federal OSHA posted a new Heat Illness webpage at [www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html). This webpage includes educational materials such as worksite and community posters, fact sheets for workers, a public service announcement, videos and a heat index smartphone application.

This webpage says that OSHA is partnering with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on weather service alerts. NOAA's "Heat Watch" page includes worker safety precautions when extreme heat alerts are issued.

The "Labor Works" announcement says that the Kentucky OSH program is emphasizing two key aspects of the prevention of heat stress related illnesses: sufficient water and adequate rest.

According to the announcement, most individuals exposed to hot conditions drink less fluid than they need because of an insufficient "thirst drive," and workers should not depend on thirst to signal when and how much to drink.

Instead, the Cabinet advises workers to drink five to seven ounces of fluid every 15-20 minutes on hot days, and also to take regular rest breaks.

The announcement states that, "employers must ensure that employees are protected from the hazards associated with heat stress."

While there is no specific regulatory standard con-

cerning the hazards of heat stress, this admonition presumably means that the Kentucky OSH Program believes that employers have a duty to prevent heat stress under the general duty clause in KRS § 338.031, and that the Compliance Division of the KOSH Program will issue citations to employers that fail to fulfill this duty. ▲

### Furthermore on avoiding heat illnesses

Heat is the No. 1 weather-related killer in the United States. On average, excessive heat claims more lives each year than floods, lightning, tornadoes and hurricanes combined. In the heat wave of 1995 more than 700 deaths in the Chicago area were attributed to heat; and in August 2003, a record heat wave in Europe claimed an estimated 50,000 lives, says the US Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Heat is responsible for killing 162 people in the US on average each year.

As the heat and humidity continues in Kentucky — more than 1,000 heat records have been broken this summer across the country (as of mid-July) — federal and state OSH offices have issued heat alerts to educate employers on the dangers of working outdoors in extreme heat. U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis said, in a news release, that guidelines for staying safe include:

- Have a plan to prevent heat-related injuries;
- Provide plenty of water at the job site so that workers are able to drink small amounts frequently;
- Have rest breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas;
- Allow new workers to gradually increase their workload to get used to the heat.

Solis said there are three keys to remember: "Water, rest, shade." To read more, go to the website mentioned in column one. Or call toll-free 1-800-321-6742.

Meanwhile, the Kentucky Labor Cabinet said in a

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