



Media Release - SafeWork SA

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WORK DANGERS RISE WITH THE MERCURY

SafeWork SA is urging workplaces to ensure they have measures in place to cope with the sudden burst of high temperatures being experienced in South Australia.

With a maximum of 41 degrees forecast today, the agency says heat from the weather is a workplace hazard that needs to be considered in planning work activities,

"Employers must ensure a safe working environment, and managing such an obvious and foreseeable hazard as hot weather is a necessary part of that," says SafeWork SA Acting Executive Director, Bryan Russell.

"Heat poses a considerable risk where work takes place in confined spaces, but temperatures in industrial sheds can exceed 50 degrees, while open air or outdoor workplaces such as construction sites, storage yards, outdoor utility installations, tarmacs, roads and farms all have their dangers as well," Mr. Russell says.

"Working on through the symptoms of heat stress, can lead to serious illness and in extreme cases, death.

"There are tragic examples from interstate that we do not want to see repeated here.

"In 2009, a 19 year old apprentice died of heat stress on his first day at work installing insulation in the roof space of a Sydney home; while in Queensland in 2006, a brickie's labourer suffered massive internal injuries from the ill-effects of heat at a construction site.

"Working in a hot environment can also impair workers' concentration and judgement, which heightens the chances of other harmful incidents occurring," Mr. Russell says.

Heat stress symptoms include: headaches; fatigue; dizziness or fainting; increased sweating; mood changes such as irritability or confusion, and possibly an upset stomach or vomiting.

SafeWork SA recommends measures such as undertaking tasks at cooler times of the day; rotating workers who have to be out in the open; ensuring fresh water, shade and ventilation for the workplace as much as possible; and UV protection through hats and sunscreen.

For advice on heat stress, and other workplace health and safety issues, SafeWork SA's telephone Help Centre is available on 1 300 365 255. Serious incidents or injuries in the workplace can be reported on 1 800 777 209.