EXCESSIVE HEAT AND YOUR BUSINESS
Natural Disasters

During the summer, workers may perform more job tasks outdoors. This exposure to high temperatures and humidity can lead to life-threatening heat related illnesses. Heat-related illnesses are preventable. Protect your employees by following these suggestions.

Before Excessive Heat Situations

- **Stay informed.**
  - ☐ Monitor for heat advisories in your area at the NOAA National Weather Service. http://www.weather.gov/
  - ☐ Listen to local news and weather channels during extreme heat conditions for health and safety updates.

- **Know the terminology.**
  - ☐ *Excessive Heat Advisory:* An excessive heat event is occurring; prolonged exposure or strenuous activity might result in a heat-related illness.
  - ☐ *Excessive Heat Warning:* Life-threatening heat is occurring. Take precautions immediately!

- **Discuss heat precautions with your employees.**
  - ☐ Limit or avoid activity during the day.
  - ☐ Keep hydrated; drinking at least every 15 minutes.
  - ☐ Wear wide-brimmed hats for protection from the sun.
  - ☐ Wear sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher.
  - ☐ Dress in lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing.
  - ☐ Train employees to recognize the signs of heat illness.

- **Establish shade or cooling areas for your employees.**
  - ☐ Set up awnings or canopies, if natural shade is not available.

- **Prepare for power outages.**
  - ☐ High summertime temperatures increase energy demand for cooling; overloaded energy systems can result in power outages.
  - ☐ For more information see the Power Outage handouts in this manual.

- **Prepare your facilities.**
  - ☐ Maintain your air conditioning system to ensure it is able to work when you need it most.
  - ☐ Check air-conditioning ducts for proper insulation.
  - ☐ Window air conditioners should be installed snugly and insulated, if necessary.
  - ☐ Weather-strip doors and windows to keep cool air in.
  - ☐ Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with drapes, shades, awnings, or louvers.
  - ☐ Use electric or ceiling fans to improve ventilation and comfort.

During Excessive Heat

- **If employees work outdoors,**
  - ☐ Schedule work during the morning and late-afternoon hours.
  - ☐ Avoid strenuous activities outdoors, especially mid-day.
  - ☐ Adjust work schedules to provide workers with breaks in the shade or an air-conditioned area.
  - ☐ Postpone nonessential tasks.
  - ☐ Make sure employees drink plenty of water, frequently.

Heat-Related Illnesses

- **Heat stroke is a life-threatening situation!**
  - ☐ Occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature and the body is unable to cool itself.
  - ☐ **Signs:** extremely high body temperature (above 103°F) ● red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating) ● rapid, strong pulse ● throbbing headache ● dizziness ● nausea ● confusion ● unconsciousness
  - ☐ **If you see any of these signs, get medical assistance immediately!**

- **Heat exhaustion.**
  - ☐ A milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids.
  - ☐ **Signs:** cool, moist, pale or flushed skin ● heavy sweating ● headache ● nausea ● dizziness ● weakness
  - ☐ Cool the victim by: providing cool, nonalcoholic beverages ● rest in a cool or air-conditioned environment● cool shower, bath, or sponge bath
  - ☐ If the person vomits or begins to lose consciousness, **get medical assistance immediately!**

- **Heat cramps.**
  - ☐ Muscle pains or spasms (usually in the legs or abdomen) that occur in association with loss of fluids and electrolytes following strenuous activity.
  - ☐ Often an early sign the body is having trouble with heat.

- **Sunburn.**
  - ☐ Damage to the skin that significantly slows the skin's ability to release heat.
  - ☐ Usually minor discomfort that heals in a week.
  - ☐ Severe sunburn may require medical attention.

- **Heat rash.**
  - ☐ Skin irritation caused by excessive sweating during hot, humid weather.

the Center for Food Security & Public Health
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY®
College of Veterinary Medicine