



New York State School Safety Group 491

Route to:
_ Superintendent
_ School Business Off.
_ Athletic Director
_ Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
_ Site Administrators
_ Transportation Dir.
_ Lunch Director
_ Classroom Teachers
_ _____

Safe Schools Agenda

Volume 12, Issue 7

July 2005

A monthly service provided to help you with your efforts to make your school safe for students, staff and the public

Beware of the Hazards of Summer Heat

Staff members and students who work or practice outdoors must be well informed about possible injuries and illnesses related to outdoor exposure. The risks of Heat-Related Illnesses, Lightning strikes, and Insect-Borne Diseases such as Lyme Disease and the West Nile Virus all reach their peak during the summer. School administrators can reduce these risks for staff and students who work and play outside by taking some simple and low cost measures, and raising awareness of these hazards and how to minimize the risk.

Heat-related Illnesses are a hazard whenever there is a long period of outdoor exposure to the summer heat. Heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, heat rashes are all variations that can affect those who work and play outdoors.

Heat Stroke is a medical emergency that, if not treated, can lead to death. Warning signs of heat stroke include:

- High body temperatures, 104 degrees Fahrenheit or over
- Hot and dry skin that appears bluish or red
- No sweating
- Rapid heart rate
- Dizziness
- Shivering
- Nausea
- Irritability
- Severe headaches
- Mental confusion

- Convulsions
- Unconsciousness, which may result in coma or death

Heat Exhaustion is very serious because, if left untreated, it can lead to heat stroke. Heat exhaustion victims show signs of:

- Heavy sweating
- Clammy, flushed or pale skin
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Rapid/shallow breathing
- Headaches
- Vomiting
- Fainting

Heat Syncope, which is heat-related dizziness and fainting, can also lead to physical injury if one becomes dizzy or passes out. It is caused by standing still for an extended period in a hot environment. Blood pools in the skin and legs, decreasing blood flow to the brain. There are no warning signs. To treat syncope, move the victim to a cooler environment. Heat syncope can be avoided by acclimatation to the hot environment, avoiding stationary activities and observing the other precautions recommended for avoiding heat-related illness.

Heat Cramps are painful cramps or spasms in the legs, arms or abdomen, with excessive sweating.

Visit our Website at www.nysgroup491.com

Email: info@nysgroup491.com

Program Administrator: Professional Underwriters 1-800-833-8822



July 2005

Heat Rash occurs when skin remains damp because of unevaporated sweat, causing red bumps on skin because of the build up of sweat underneath. Heat rash can cause damage to the skin and sweat glands, lead to infection, and even progress to heat exhaustion.

Heat-related illnesses occur when internal body temperature increases and the body cannot cool itself effectively. Even without serious physical illness, intense heat increases the chance that individuals will lose their concentration, become fatigued and irritable, and become injured.

To avoid heat-related illnesses, OSHA recommends that individuals:

- ◇ Acclimate themselves to the heat slowly
- ◇ Perform the heaviest work during the coolest part of the day
- ◇ Limit exposure to the heat by taking frequent short breaks in cooler areas
- ◇ Drink plenty of cool water – one small cup every 15 or 20 minutes
- ◇ Wear light, loose fitting clothing that keeps the body cool but prevents sunburn
- ◇ Avoid eating large meals before working in hot environments
- ◇ Avoid caffeine and alcoholic beverages, which make the body lose water
- ◇ Work in pairs

Individuals who take medication, including over the counter medications and dietary supplements, should check with their physicians to determine whether those medications may contribute to heat-related illness.

Lightning Strikes are more likely and present a serious hazard. An average of 73 people per year have been killed by lightning strikes over the past 30 years; another 300 people are injured per year. Lightning has the second-highest death toll per year of all natural disasters, behind flooding. Being struck by lightning can cause death or debilitating and ongoing health problems.

During thunderstorm season, administrators and staff members should carefully monitor weather forecasts. Adjust activities so that no one is stranded in a dangerous area during thunderstorms, and establish emergency plans for those who are caught in a thunderstorm. Staff members should be trained about those plans, and how to seek shelter in an emergency. Outdoor staff members should work in pairs or teams, and should always have a means of summoning emergency help.

Lyme Disease is a tick-borne illness that has affected thousands. The highest risk areas for infection with Lyme disease include the states from Massachusetts to Maryland, the north-central region including Wisconsin and Minnesota, and northern California. To reduce exposure to Lyme Disease, individuals should:

- ◇ Avoid tall grass and shrubs
- ◇ Wear long pants, sleeves, closed-toe shoes, and a hat
- ◇ Wear light colored clothing
- ◇ Shower and wash clothing at high temperatures to kill any possible ticks
- ◇ Widen trails through woods and always walk away from vegetation
- ◇ Remove brush pile habitats
- ◇ Use effective bug repellents on shoes, socks and pants
- ◇ Apply insecticides to areas that harbor ticks.

West Nile Virus is transmitted to humans by infected mosquitoes. It travels through the blood and can occasionally cause encephalitis and problems with the central nervous system. To avoid infection with the West Nile Virus, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends:

- ◇ Staying indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening
- ◇ Wearing long pants and sleeves outdoors
- ◇ Spraying clothing with a repellent containing DEET or permethrin, and applying insect repellent with 35% DEET to exposed skin.