

Temperature extremes in your working environment

Information Sheet

Purpose

The purpose of this Information sheet is to provide guidance for workers on ways to minimise the effect of temperature extremes in the workplace.

It should be noted that there is no specific legislation that specifies maximum or minimum temperatures in the workplace, however the University has a primary duty of care under the Work Health and Safety Act (2012) to ensure that we have a safe working environment and safe systems of work. Follow the [Hazard Management](#) process for any work-related activity where temperature extremes (hot or cold) are foreseeable.

Q1 What do you do if you have concerns about the temperature in your indoor working environment?

If you have concerns about the temperature in your working environment advise your Manager/Supervisor. They will co-ordinate appropriate action and take into consideration the environmental factors and the business needs of your area.

General recommendations for working during extreme hot weather conditions while indoors

- You should ensure that you remain hydrated by drinking an adequate amount of water.
- If, you are required to go outside, consider carrying a water bottle with you.
- Consider your attire and wear something that is appropriate for the hot conditions.

Consider the following strategies in consultation with your Manager/Supervisor:

- As a priority, review and modify activities where there are high levels of physical activity.
- As a priority, review and modify activities where air temperatures are extreme.
- Take short rest breaks (e.g. 10 minutes per hour).
- Reorganise duties to fit the environmental conditions.
- Perform activities in a cooler environment if possible (e.g. explore alternative work areas).
- Consider practicalities of varying the work hours (e.g. arrive early/leave early).
- Consider if it is possible to relax local dress codes for the duration of the extreme weather conditions.
- Insulate equipment giving off radiant heat where possible.
- Ensure adequate water is readily available.
- Keep blinds down and external doors closed.
- Where practical, switch off non-essential equipment and lights (equipment on standby consumes electricity and generates heat).
- If working in isolation, ensure arrangements for welfare checks are in place.

Air-conditioning

Please be aware that during extreme weather conditions that the Infrastructure Branch (Service Delivery) monitor the situation across University owned buildings and manage requests relating to air conditioners that are struggling under the strain.

Unfortunately the University is not in a position to centrally provide temporary air-conditioning to all Schools/Branches. If you have an air conditioning problem in a building with a centralised system please report the problem to your Manager/Supervisor (or nominated administration representative) so that Service Delivery (maintenance section) do not receive a multitude of individual calls for the same issue. If in a leased building, please contact the relevant Property Manager. Managers/Supervisors are advised that to report an air conditioning fault you should call:

North Terrace:	(831) 34008	Leased buildings	Contact the relevant Property Mgr
Waite:	(831) 37217		
Roseworthy	(831) 37657		

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Q2 What action should I take if working in a Hot Room (i.e. temperature controlled room)?

Consider the recommendations for extreme hot weather (Q1) and implement control measures where relevant. If working in isolation, ensure arrangements for welfare checks are in place.

Q3 What are the symptoms of heat stress? (Hyperthermia)

Symptoms of heat stress may include skin irritations (prickly heat), cramps, headache, dizziness, nausea, impaired judgement, hyperventilation, weak and rapid pulse, or difficulty in breathing.

Q4 What should I do if I think that a worker is suffering from heat stress?

Please advise your Manager/Supervisor and contact your [first aid officer](#) immediately.

First aid for heat stress depends on the severity but may involve:

- transfer of the individual to a cooler location;
- reduction in any physical activity;
- slow intake of cool, not cold water;
- reducing body temperature - wet the skin and increase air movement (e.g. fan), soak clothes in cold water;
- laying down if necessary; and/or
- seeking medical assistance.

For serious medical emergencies (e.g. person is incoherent, has a seizure, becomes unconscious)

- Ring for an ambulance (0) 000; then
- Notify Security if assistance is required:

North Terrace	(831) 35990
Waite	(831) 37200
Roseworthy	(831) 37999
Thebarton	(831) 35990

North Terrace only – Uni Health (831) 35050

Service can also assist.

They are located - Ground Floor <http://adelaideunicare.com.au/our-practices/university-health-medical-practice>
 Horace Lamb Building
 Open 8.30am – 5.30pm

Q5 What strategies are there if working in a cold working environment?

Consider the following strategies in consultation with your Manager/Supervisor:

- Ensure that appropriate clothing is worn.
- Where possible include and/or increase the individual's physical activity.
- If working in isolation, ensure arrangements for welfare checks are in place.
- If working in cold-stores and walk in freezers, ensure a risk assessment has been conducted in accordance with the [Hazard Management](#) process. Control measures may include:
 - Engineering controls
 - Ensuring that there are fail-safe systems to ensure that a person cannot become trapped in the room.
 - Fitting an audible/visual alarm to the outside of all cold room and walk in freezer rooms and an emergency button should a person become trapped inside or require assistance.
 - Displaying thermometers outside of the cold store.
 - Administrative controls
 - Communication - informing another staff member that you are working in isolation if you intend to work in this space for longer than walk-in/walk-out.
 - Ensuring staff take regular short breaks outside of the cold room or freezer and time spent in the cold store or freezer is as short as possible.
 - Personal protective equipment
 - Provision of thermal gloves and coat.

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Q5 What strategies are there if there is constant cold (e.g. less than 9°C) and wind exposure

Consider the following strategies in consultation with your Manager/Supervisor:

- Nominate a person to monitor temperature.
- Provide a heated indoor rest area, which is nearby and accessible.
- Make provision for warm drinks.
- Ensure adequate clothing is provided.
- Cancel/reschedule activities if required.

Q6 What are the symptoms of excessive cold? (Hypothermia)

Symptoms of hypothermia may include shivering, clumsiness or lack of co-ordination, slurred speech, drowsiness, apathy, weak pulse, loss of consciousness, shallow breathing.

What should I do if I think that a worker is suffering excessive cold exposure?

Please advise your Manager/Supervisor and contact your first aid officer immediately.

First aid for mild cases of hypothermia may involve preventing further heat loss, moving them to a protected location, cover their head and insulate their body from any cold surface, re-warming the body core temperature, providing warm fluids, providing hot water bottles, providing warm/dry clothing.

Q7 What strategies should I consider if working outdoors and there is a potential for temperature extremes?

The University requires that Managers/Supervisors take steps to reduce the risk of injury/illness in accordance with the [Hazard Management](#) process. In addition to the risk from temperature extremes and information provided, workers who conduct their activities outdoors for all or part of the day are at risk of skin cancer from solar radiation. The damage is permanent and irreversible and increases with each exposure.

Consider the following strategies in consultation with your Manager/Supervisor:

- Identify work-related activities where exposure to solar radiation poses a risk:
(Consider time of year, times of the day, pattern and length of exposure, presence of reflective surfaces.)
- Identify sun protection control measures (provide shade, canopies, modify reflective surfaces, consider window tinting (including work vehicles where applicable), reschedule activities to where levels are less intense (e.g. early morning or late afternoon), provide indoor areas or shaded outdoor areas for rest/meal breaks, provide personal protective equipment and clothing (e.g. hats, sunglasses, sunscreen of SPF 30+ and broad-spectrum), provide adequate water; and
- Provide training to staff where control measures are in place.

Q8 Where can I obtain further information on temperature extremes in your working environment?

- [Cancer Council](#)
[Prevention of skin cancer](#)
- [SafeWork SA](#)
[Managing the Work Environment and Facilities](#)
[Heat and UV](#)
- [St John Fact Sheet](#)
[First aid for heat induced illnesses](#)

If you wish to discuss further, please contact your local [HSW Team](#).

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