

# SAFETY & LOSS PREVENTION

# OUTLOOK

READY OR NOT,  
HERE COMES

# SUMMER

Prepare for Florida's  
hottest months  
*before conditions  
become dangerous*



**ALSO INSIDE:**

Electrical Safety in the Office

How pre-existing health conditions can affect heat tolerance

April is National Defensive Driving Awareness Month



# OUTLOOK

Issue 2, Volume 17 | April - June 2026

## A Message from the Editor

Florida's transition into warmer months inspires thoughts of beach trips, barbecues, and cold drinks by the pool -- but also the dangerous hazards caused by extreme heat. From occupational heat stress and heat-related illness to the role of pre-existing conditions and medications on heat tolerance, this issue of OUTLOOK takes a closer look at how heat impacts employees across a wide range of job tasks and environments, including those that aren't traditionally considered high-risk.

Managing heat-related risks takes more than awareness -- it requires planning ahead, engaging leadership, and putting practical strategies in place before conditions become dangerous. Whether it's adjusting work practices, improving training, or strengthening policies, every organization has an opportunity -- and a responsibility -- to keep their employees safe from the effects of heat stress.

We also take a look at electrical safety, particularly in office settings, where the small devices used every day can lead to big consequences when something goes wrong. Also, National Distracted Driving Awareness Month (April) reminds us how quickly a moment of inattention can have life-changing consequences.

As always, we hope these resources will help support your organization's safety program by reinforcing its strengths and finding new ways to improve.

Wishing you a safe and healthy start to summer,

*Leri Taylor*  
Managing Editor

## INTERAGENCY ADVISORY COUNCIL



If you know an agent, employee, or volunteer who has made exceptional contributions to the reduction and control of employment-related accidents, contact your agency's safety coordinator to submit a nomination. Safety coordinators should submit nominations to the Division of Risk Management's Loss Prevention section at least two weeks prior to an upcoming quarterly IAC meeting. Nominee approvals will be made by IAC members during the meeting.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

The next Interagency Advisory Council meeting will take place in person at:

The Hermitage Center  
First Floor Conference Room  
1801 Hermitage Blvd.  
Tallahassee FL, 32308

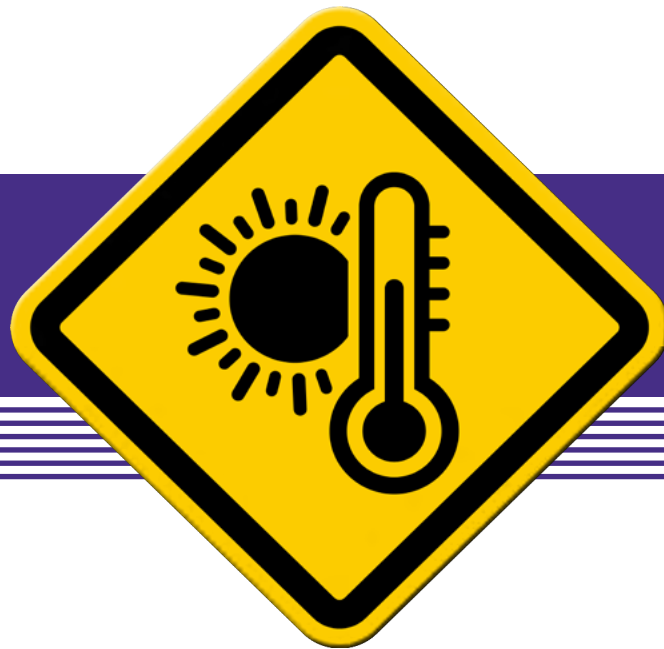
May 26, 2026 at 2:30 pm

Council Members: Look for an email invitation coming soon

# IN THIS ISSUE

- A Message from the Editor / IAC Award Info..... 2
- Table of Contents..... 3
- Occupational Heat Stress ..... 4
- Heat Stress: Who Is At Risk? ..... 5
- Management Level Prevention Strategies ..... 6
- Heat-Related Illness ..... 8
- Pre-Existing Conditions, Medications, & Heat Stress ..... 11
- Electrical Safety in the Office: Small Devices, Big Consequences ..... 12
- Electrical Safety Quick Check ..... 13
- Eliminating Office Electrical Fire Hazards ..... 14
- April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month ..... 15
- Roadway crashes lead to costly claims, workers' comp report shows..... 16
- Electrical Safety In Construction: OSHA Unveils New Initiative..... 16
- Extension Cords: 5 Things To Know..... 17
- OUTLOOK Online Library / DFS E-Learning System..... 18
- Safety & Loss Prevention OUTLOOK Team -- Credits & Contact Information..... 19
- References & Resources ..... 20
- Image Attribution..... 21

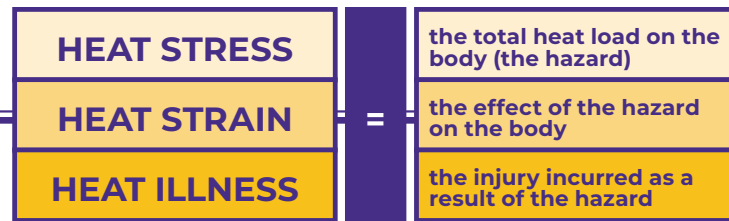
# OCCUPATIONAL HEAT STRESS



## HEAT-RELATED INJURIES: More Than Just Heat Illness

Heat impairs the mind and body, directly contributing to risk factors for common workplace accidents such as slips, trips, and falls, equipment mishandling, and collisions -- and yet heat exposure is typically not considered as the cause when injuries other than heat illnesses occur. A deeper dive into an incident report is needed to learn whether heat stress contributed to an injury. Treating heat exposure as a basic safety issue -- not just a health issue -- strengthens risk management programs across job categories.

**Occupational heat stress** refers to the total heat load placed on a worker's body due to a combination of environmental conditions, physical activity, protective clothing, and internal metabolic heat. When the body cannot maintain a safe internal temperature, workers experience **heat strain**, which can progress to **heat illness**.



### PHYSIOLOGY

- **Cognitive and Behavioral Impairments:** Exposure to high temperatures degrades executive functioning, causing slower reaction times, memory issues, increased irritability, decreased situational awareness, and poor judgment.
- **Dehydration:** Even moderate dehydration (common on hot days) impacts blood volume, cognitive clarity, and cardiovascular strain, lowering the body's stress tolerance.
- **Physical Strain & Fatigue:** Heat exposure leads to muscle fatigue, impaired coordination and balance, and reduced grip strength.
- **Physiological Load:** Heat exposure increases perceived effort (making work feel harder), accelerates fatigue, and diminishes endurance, which can cause workers to make mistakes or adopt unsafe behaviors such as cutting corners, rushing, skipping breaks, or removing personal protective equipment (PPE) -- paradoxically coping with discomfort by increasing risk.

EACH TEMPERATURE INCREASE OF **1°F** IS ASSOCIATED WITH A **0.5-1%** INCREASE IN WORKPLACE INJURIES

### STATISTICS & DATA ANALYSES

Heat is the leading cause of death among all weather-related phenomena in the United States; the number of heat-related deaths more than doubled in the past two decades. Florida leads the nation in heat-related illnesses, according to the U.S. Census Bureau and the CDC.

Among U.S. workers, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates around **3,400** cases of heat illness each year. But research shows that heat exposure does more than cause heat illness -- it increases the likelihood of other types of injuries as well. Nearly **28,000** work-related injuries associated with heat exposure occur each year.

A nationwide analysis of OSHA injury data found a significant association between increasing heat index values and overall work injury risk:

- Injury odds began rising once the heat index reached about **85°F**.
- Odds continued to accelerate at higher temperatures (**90°F and above**).
- Workers exposed to high temperatures above 90°F showed **6-9% higher** risks of injuries compared to cooler days; at 100°F and higher, injury risk climbed by **10-15%**.
- Data analyses indicated that for every **1°F increase** in environmental temperature, workplace **injury risk increased** by about **1%**.

This pattern emerged across nearly all industry sectors, including predominantly indoor workplaces, indicating the need for heat safety in all settings (not just outdoors).

### HEAT STRESS: WHO IS AT RISK?

OUTDOORS	INDOORS
Emergency response teams & firefighters	
Agricultural & forestry workers; park rangers	Laundry / kitchen & food service workers
Utility & road maintenance workers	Custodial / building maintenance staff
Law & traffic enforcement officers	Workers in facilities without air conditioning
Mail & package delivery workers	Workers who work near or maintain equipment that generates heat
Environmental field researchers & scientists	Warehouse / storage area workers
Outdoor grounds & facility maintenance staff	Computer server technicians & operators
Athletic faculty & students	

**DID YOU KNOW?**



**Over 70% of heat-related deaths occur during a worker's first week, and more than half occur on the first day (or first day back) on the job.**

**FOR MORE INFO ON PREVENTING HEAT ILLNESS, VISIT:**

NOAA/National Weather Service -- <https://www.weather.gov/safety/heat>  
 CDC/NIOSH -- <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/heat-stress/about/index.html>  
 U.S. Dept. of Labor/OSHA's Heat Safety Tool -- <https://www.osha.gov/heat/heat-app>

ACCLIMATIZATION

HYDRATION

SCHEDULING & MONITORING

TRAINING & RESPONSE

PLANNING & PREVENTION

TECHNOLOGY

## MANAGEMENT-LEVEL PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Heat-related illnesses and injuries are largely preventable with appropriate management controls in place. With the prevalence of extreme heat events, many organizations have begun integrating heat stress management into their broader occupational safety and emergency preparedness programs.

### ACCLIMATIZATION

Sudden full-intensity work in hot environments significantly increases the risk of heat stroke. Acclimatized workers have lower heart rates and core body temperature, lose salt and electrolytes at a slower rate, have earlier and more efficient sweat response, have better organ function, and generally feel less uncomfortable in the heat overall.

Both new and returning workers require gradual exposure to hot environments over **1-2 weeks**.

Example:

	NEW WORKER	RETURNING WORKER
DAY 1	20% of normal work duration (1.5-hr of 8-hr shift)	50% of normal work duration (4-hr of 8-hr shift)
DAY 2	40% of normal work duration (3.2-hr of 8-hr shift)	60% of normal work duration (4.8-hr of 8-hr shift)
DAY 3	60% of normal work duration (4.8-hr of 8-hr shift)	80% of normal work duration (6.4-hr of 8-hr shift)
DAY 4	80% of normal work duration (6.4-hr of 8-hr shift)	100% of normal work duration (monitor & adjust as needed)
DAY 5+	100% of normal work duration (monitor & adjust as needed)	100% (continue monitoring)

### HYDRATION

Accessibility to cool, clean drinking water is essential. Encourage workers in hot environments to take water breaks at regular intervals (whether they feel thirsty or not), roughly **8 ounces every 15-20 minutes**, not to exceed 48 ounces per hour. Drinking smaller amounts more frequently works better than large amounts less frequently. Avoid drinks with high amounts of caffeine or sugar.



### SCHEDULING & MONITORING

**Scheduling:** Have workers perform the most strenuous tasks during cooler periods (early morning tends to work best). Schedule mandatory rest periods, especially during extreme heat events. Rotate heavy tasks among workers. Do not allow workers to skip breaks for any reason.

**Monitoring:** Check in regularly with workers during heat events to gauge their levels of discomfort. Have them use the "buddy system" to watch for signs of heat illness or potentially dangerous cognitive/physical declines in performance (muscle fatigue, forgetfulness, irritability, etc.); early reporting prevents escalation.

Use the heat index or Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (**WBGT**) to assess the risk in real time, or download the **OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool**. Unlike the heat index (which measures air temperature and humidity in the shade), a WBGT meter provides a portable and more accurate measure of outdoor heat stress by also accounting for wind speed, sun angle, and cloud cover.



### PLANNING & PREVENTION

Review your organization's injury data for the hottest days of the year to establish patterns -- where and what type of injuries are most prevalent during heat events -- and use that information to better prepare staff for future hot days.

Look at forecasts beforehand to know when dangerous heat waves are coming, prepare workers with safety reminders and cooling supplies, and adjust schedules or work locations as needed.

Take extra precautions when workers are performing especially hazardous tasks, such as heavy lifting, operating vehicles or machinery, climbing ladders or scaffolding, wearing PPE, or working in remote areas.



### TRAINING & EMERGENCY RESPONSE

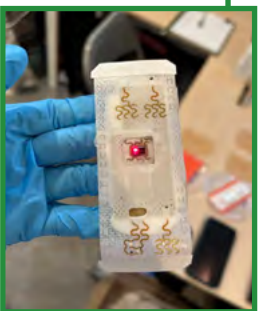
Supervisors and workers must be trained to recognize the early symptoms of heat illness in themselves and in others, know how to provide basic first aid when symptoms are present, and understand what constitutes an emergency and know how to respond. Most importantly, they should know what steps to take to prevent heat illness before it occurs.

### TECHNOLOGY

Smart PPE can help mitigate the risks associated with heat stress by monitoring environmental conditions, measuring workers' biometrics in real time, and providing cooling relief when needed.

**Portable monitors:** These devices measure external heat exposure using air temperature, humidity, radiant heat, or WBGT, helping to determine when it becomes necessary to modify work schedules, increase breaks, or rotate crews. These can be handheld, clipped to a belt or tripod, or worn as an armband.

**Wearable monitors:** Many smartwatches can already monitor things like heart rate, respiratory rate, and activity level. Newer wearable monitors can track other heat strain indicators such as body temperature, sweat & dehydration levels, and fatigue. These monitors can be worn on the wrist, adhered to the chest or arm, or in the ear. Some are even integrated directly into garments such as helmets and shirts.



**Cooling fabrics & devices:** Clothing made from special fabrics can help keep the body cool -- moisture-wicking fabrics pull sweat away from the skin; breathable fabrics allow hot air to escape; reflective fabrics reduce radiant heat absorption.

Evaporative cooling devices such as cooling towels, vests, and neck wraps cool the body and aid in evaporative cooling. Some contain cooling gel, built-in fans, or even circulated chilled liquid.

## HEAT EXHAUSTION

## HEAT STROKE

## HEAT SYNCOPE

## HEAT CRAMPS

## HEAT RASH

## RHABDOMYOLYSIS

# HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES



Florida's extreme heat and humidity puts people in danger of experiencing heat-related illnesses, many of which can become serious if not recognized and treated in a timely manner. Outdoor workers suffer the greatest risk, but those working indoors in hot environments can also be affected.

## PRIMARY RISK FACTORS

- **HIGH HUMIDITY:** More moisture in the air inhibits the body's ability to cool the body by producing sweat.
- **OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:** High temperatures, direct sunlight, and stagnant air in enclosed spaces (a parked car, a sealed room, etc.) can lead to rapid overheating.
- **DEHYDRATION:** The body needs fluids in order to produce sweat, and body fluids are depleted by sweating.
- **PHYSICAL EXERTION:** Strenuous activity in high heat conditions increases the body's core temperature.
- **CLOTHING:** Clothes that are too heavy, too tight, or made of fabrics that trap heat and moisture can cause overheating and prevent sweat evaporation. Heavy protective equipment (such as armored vests, full body respirators, and firefighting gear) can exacerbate the risk.
- **INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS:** Older adults, young children, and people with underlying health conditions (such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and respiratory illnesses) are at higher risk.
- **SUBSTANCE USE:** Use of alcohol, marijuana, and certain prescription medications (such as diuretics, beta-blockers, antidepressants, and ADHD medications) can lower the body's heat tolerance.
- **LACK OF ACCLIMATIZATION:** The body needs time (typically 7-14 days) to adapt to working in hot conditions.

## HEAT EXHAUSTION

**WHAT IT IS:** Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt, usually due to excessive sweating.

### SYMPTOMS:

- headache
- nausea; dizziness
- muscle weakness
- irritability
- excessive thirst
- heavy sweating
- elevated body temperature
- decreased urine output

### FIRST AID:

- Take worker to a clinic or emergency room for medical evaluation and treatment. Call 9-1-1 if immediate medical care is unavailable.
- Move the worker to a cooler area (shade, an air-conditioned vehicle, etc.) and stay with them until medical help arrives.
- Have the worker drink cool liquids (non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated).
- Have the worker remove outer layers of clothing, shoes, and socks.
- Use cold compresses to cool the skin, or have the worker wash their hands, wrists, face, and neck with cold water.

## HEAT STROKE

**WHAT IT IS:** Heat stroke occurs when the body can no longer regulate its temperature due to extreme heat, high humidity, or intense physical exertion. When the ability to sweat fails, the body is unable to cool down, and body temperature can rise to dangerous levels within minutes.

**Heat stroke is the most serious type of heat-related illness and can cause permanent damage to vital organs or death if not treated immediately.**

### SYMPTOMS:

- confusion; slurred speech
- altered mental state
- hot, dry skin or profuse sweating
- seizures
- very high body temperature (104° F or higher)
- loss of consciousness

### FIRST AID:

- Call 9-1-1 immediately, and stay with the worker until medical services arrive.
- Move the worker to a cooler area and remove outer clothing.
- Cool the worker quickly with a cold water bath, if possible, or by soaking clothing with cool water.
- Place cool, wet compresses or ice packs on the head, neck, armpits, and groin area.
- Circulate the air around the worker to speed cooling.
- If the person is able to swallow, offer cool water or sports drinks. Do not force fluids if they are confused or unconscious.



## HEAT SYNCOPE

**WHAT IT IS:** Heat syncope is an episode of dizziness or fainting due to inadequate blood flow to the brain, usually when standing still for long periods or when rising suddenly from sitting or lying down. Episodes can be caused by working in hot environments and dehydration.

### SYMPTOMS:

- headache
- nausea
- dizziness or lightheadedness
- vision changes (seeing spots or stars, blurred or tunnel vision)
- sudden hot flashes or excessive sweating
- cold, clammy skin
- flushed or excessively pale skin
- muscle cramps
- muffled hearing
- sudden tiredness, weakness, or grogginess
- heart palpitations or weak pulse

### FIRST AID:

- Have worker sit with legs elevated or lie down in a cool place until symptoms pass (typically 10-15 minutes).
- Offer water, clear juice, or sports drinks.
- Remove tight or excessive clothing.
- Apply cool, wet cloths to skin, and use a fan to help with evaporative cooling.
- Allow worker to rest in a cool area, and avoid strenuous activity for the remainder of the day.
- Continue to monitor symptoms and vital signs.
- Seek medical help if the person remains unconscious for longer than 1-2 minutes or experiences symptoms of more serious heat illness.

## HEAT CRAMPS

**WHAT IT IS:** Heat cramps are painful, involuntary muscle spasms caused by excessive sweating, dehydration, and electrolyte loss during intense physical activity in hot environments. They may be a sign of heat exhaustion.

**SYMPTOMS:**

- intense muscle pains or spasms, especially in the legs, arms, or abdomen
- hard or lumpy muscles
- fatigue; nausea

**FIRST AID:**

- Have worker drink water or a sports drink and eat a snack rich in carbohydrates. Do not use salt tablets.
- Seek medical care if symptoms do not subside within one hour.

## RHABDOMYOLYSIS

**WHAT IT IS:** Rhabdomyolysis ("rhabdo") is a medical condition triggered by heat stress, overexertion, and/or severe dehydration in which the rapid breakdown of muscle tissue causes the release of electrolytes and proteins into the bloodstream.

**Rhabdo can cause severe illness, permanent injury, and even death if not treated promptly.**

**SYMPTOMS:**

- intense muscle cramps
- abnormally dark urine (red or tea-colored) / reduced urine output
- fatigue or weakness / exercise intolerance
- can be asymptomatic until more serious issues arise, such as irregular heartbeat, kidney failure, or cardiac arrest

**FIRST AID:**

- Workers with symptoms should immediately stop all activity, rest, and drink a large amount of water.
- Worker must seek immediate medical care and ask to be checked for rhabdo.

**TREATMENT:**

- Most patients recover if treated promptly with IV fluids to flush the kidneys.

## HEAT RASH

**WHAT IT IS:** Heat rash (also called miliaria) occurs when excessive sweating during hot, humid conditions blocks sweat glands and causes the skin to become irritated.

**SYMPTOMS:**

- small blisters, red bumps, or deep lumps
- may sting, burn, or itch
- typically appear on the neck, chest, or in skin creases (such as knees, elbows, or groin)

**FIRST AID:**

- Move worker to a cooler, less humid environment, if possible.
- Use fans to cool and dry the skin.
- Keep the rash area dry. Do not use ointments, lotions, or creams.
- Apply cornstarch or powder to soothe area.
- Wear loose-fitting, breathable fabrics until symptoms subside.
- Seek medical care if rash lasts more than 3 days, becomes infected, or is accompanied by a fever.



Workers whose jobs require wearing heavy protective equipment are especially susceptible to heat rash -- even those who work indoors.

## PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS, MEDICATIONS, & HEAT STRESS

The body protects itself from heat by sweating (evaporative cooling), vasodilation (increased blood flow to help move body heat to the skin), and elevated heart rate (helping blood flow and removing body heat faster). Certain pre-existing medical conditions and types of medications can significantly increase a worker's vulnerability to heat stress by interfering with these functions. Safety professionals must take these health factors into consideration when assessing environmental heat risks for certain individuals.

**MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

- **Cardiovascular disease / Hypertension / Prior heart attack:** may reduce the body's ability to raise heart rate and blood pressure in order to cool the body.
- **Diabetes:** impairs circulation and increases dehydration risk; nerve damage can affect the ability to sweat.
- **Kidney disease:** affects the body's ability to balance fluids and electrolytes, increasing dehydration risk.
- **Obesity:** can increase heat storage in the body, leading to greater strain on the cardiovascular system.
- **Prior heat illness:** can lower heat tolerance for weeks or even months.
- **Additional risk factors:** Dehydration, recent illness or fever, alcohol use, lack of sleep, and/or poor physical conditioning can affect heat tolerance.

**MEDICATIONS**

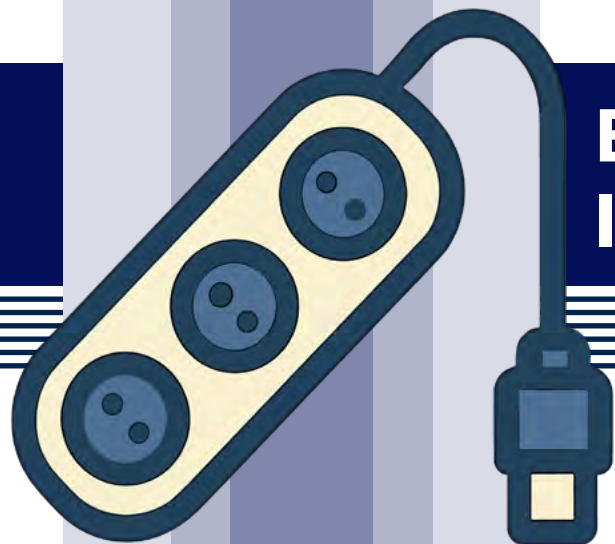
- **Diuretics ("water pills"):** increase risk of dehydration and electrolyte imbalances.
- **Antihistamines (e.g., allergy or cold medicine):** suppress sweating and may cause reduced alertness.
- **Anticholinergics (e.g., medications that treat bladder disorders, Parkinson's disease, and some gastrointestinal conditions):** suppress sweating and reduce the body's ability to dissipate heat.
- **Psychiatric medications (e.g., certain antidepressants, antipsychotics, mood stabilizers, etc.):** can alter the brain's temperature regulation mechanisms, impairing sweating and reducing awareness of overheating.
- **Blood pressure medications (beta blockers, ACE inhibitors, ARBs, and calcium channel blockers):** inhibit sweating by reducing blood flow to the skin, reduce the body's ability to raise heart rate and blood pressure in order to cool the body, and decrease the sensation of thirst. They can also affect circulation, increasing the risk of heat syncope (fainting).
- **Stimulants (e.g., ADHD or weight loss meds):** increase blood pressure, heart rate, and body temperature, increasing susceptibility to heat strain during physical work; they can also cause dehydration.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR WORKPLACE SAFETY PROGRAMS

Because medication use and medical conditions are personal health matters, employers cannot require workers to disclose specific diagnoses or prescriptions. However, safety programs can still address these risks through general preventive strategies. Be sure to focus on observable symptoms and environmental conditions rather than personal health information.

- Encourage workers to consult their healthcare provider about the heat risks associated with their medical conditions and medications.
- Emphasize hydration and rest breaks.
- Provide heat safety training including the effects of medical conditions and medications on heat tolerance.
- Implement acclimatization programs.
- Stress the importance for workers to report symptoms early.





# ELECTRICAL SAFETY IN THE OFFICE

## SMALL DEVICES, BIG CONSEQUENCES

Electrical hazards rarely look dangerous until an incident occurs. Most office electrical fires are not caused by building wiring, but by something seemingly mundane -- an overloaded outlet, a faulty wire, an overheating appliance. These devices may be small, but they come with enormous consequences when they fail.

Even a minor electrical fire can cause damaging repercussions even greater than the fire itself: a building and its contents contaminated by toxic smoke, forcing occupants to evacuate, triggering sprinkler systems, destroying office equipment, soaking documents and personal belongings. The costs of repair, replacement, and cleaning -- as well as interruption of business and relocation costs -- can be tremendous.



CUBICLE FIRE DAMAGE



MELTED PLUG ADAPTER

## COMMON ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

**Overloaded outlets:** Offices often have multiple devices plugged into a single outlet using adapters, cube taps, or extension cords. When the combined electrical load exceeds what the outlet or device can safely handle, wiring can overheat and melt insulation, creating a fire risk.

**Small personal devices:** Space heaters, fans, coffee makers, hot plates, and mini fridges draw significantly more power than the computers and monitors for which standard office spaces are wired. When plugged into power strips or extension cords not rated for such loads, these appliances can overheat quickly.

**Low-quality or incompatible adapters and chargers:** Many inexpensive multi-outlet adapters lack internal overload protection and degrade in a short amount of time. Not all chargers can handle the electrical load for all devices, and a mismatch can cause damage to the device, the charger, or the outlet itself.

**Damaged cords:** Cords that have been crushed, bent, knotted, overly stretched, or repeatedly stepped on can have damaged insulation and frayed wires, whether visible or not. Exposed wires pose a severe risk of electric shock and fire.

Space Heaters   Personal Fans   Coffee Makers   Mini Fridges   Toaster Ovens

HIGH-WATTAGE APPLIANCES CAN OVERLOAD CIRCUITS



## WARNING SIGNS OF ELECTRICAL OVERLOAD

- Warm or hot outlets or equipment
- Lights that flicker or dim when devices are powered on or off
- Burning smells
- Buzzing sounds from outlets or devices
- Melted or discolored plugs, outlets, or adapters
- Tripping circuit breakers
- Cracked, burned, or missing outlet covers
- Cords that are tangled or have exposed wires

If any of these occur, the equipment should be unplugged and the hazard reported to facility maintenance and/or safety coordinators immediately.

## ELECTRICAL SAFETY QUICK CHECK

Before plugging in a device at work, ask yourself:

- Does office policy allow this device/appliance?
- Is the device/appliance in good condition?
- Is the outlet/power strip in good condition?
- Is the cord undamaged and able to be used safely in this location (e.g., not dangling off the ground, hidden under a rug, or stretched across a walkway)?
- Can the device be easily unplugged when not in use?
- Is the device away from food, beverages, or water sources?

## ELIMINATING OFFICE ELECTRICAL FIRE HAZARDS

Electrical safety at work is often treated as a facilities issue, but prevention depends upon employee awareness and responsible equipment use. Most office electrical fires are not caused by building wiring, but by faulty portable equipment and improper use of power.

Fortunately, most office electrical fires can be prevented when workers know how to spot and eliminate hazards.

### ELECTRICAL SAFETY PROCEDURES IN THE OFFICE

**Limit personal devices and appliances:** Organizations should evaluate whether certain devices such as space heaters, toaster ovens, coffee makers, etc. can be permitted for personal use in individual offices or cubicles. Many office spaces have kitchens or common areas that are better suited to handle the electrical capacity of such appliances.

**Use approved power strips and adapters:** In areas where multiple devices must be connected, use only UL-listed power strips with built-in surge protection and circuit breakers. Never plug one power strip into another, which significantly increases the risk of fire and is prohibited by most safety standards.

**Check the specs and go direct:** Read the instructions before using a new device or appliance. Many small appliances specifically prohibit use with power strips or extension cords -- follow the manufacturer's directions. Avoid extension cords and power strips and plug directly into outlets whenever possible, especially devices such as copy machines, coffee makers, microwaves, and refrigerators, which must *always* be plugged directly into a wall socket.

**Provide some "breathing room":** Power strips and devices that produce heat need ventilation to stay cool. Allow adequate space for air circulation and away from combustible items such as paper or cardboard. Never block or cover smoke detectors or sprinklers. Give your devices and the electrical equipment a rest by turning them off -- or, better yet, unplugging them -- when not in use.

**Use caution with cords:** Extension cords are designed for temporary use only. Long-term office equipment should be hard-wired or plugged directly into wall outlets or approved power strips. Never run electrical cords where they may become damaged or pose a trip hazard, such as under rugs, through doorways, around corners, or across walkways.

**Handle plugs with care:** Make sure your hands are dry before attempting to plug in or unplug a device, and be careful not to touch the metal prongs. Do not force a plug into an outlet -- if it doesn't fit easily, it could be damaged. Never remove the grounding pin from a three-prong plug for any reason.

**Inspect equipment regularly:** Employees should periodically check power strips, plugs, and cords for signs of heat damage or wear. Keep electrical equipment free of dust and grime. Do not attempt to tape or otherwise repair frayed or damaged cords or plugs -- have the equipment replaced immediately.

**Charge devices safely:** Choose high-quality chargers and cords that have been tested and certified for safety. Make sure the charger meets the electrical requirements of the device. Never leave devices charging for long periods of time while unattended.

**Stay alert and report issues immediately:** Don't ignore flickering lights, strange smells, or damaged electrical equipment. Small issues can quickly turn into major problems if they go unreported.

# STOP DISTRACTED DRIVING

Eyes on the Road. Lives on the Line.

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

Each year in April, organizations across the country recognize **National Distracted Driving Awareness Month**, a campaign dedicated to reducing crashes caused by drivers who divert their attention away from the road. The initiative highlights a simple truth -- distracted driving is both widespread and entirely preventable.

Motor vehicle crashes are consistently among the leading causes of occupational fatalities nationwide, meaning distracted driving can directly impact employee safety and workers' compensation costs.

Many state employees have jobs that directly involve driving, including firefighters and law enforcement officers, as well as those who conduct inspections, do field work, maintain facilities, work in multiple facilities, or transport people or equipment. Schools and university campuses have a larger-than-average population of pedestrians and cyclists, and distracted drivers put them at great risk.

### STATISTICS

A crash occurs on Florida's roads every **44 seconds**, and **one in seven** crashes involves distracted driving.

In 2023, approximately **324,819** people were injured and **3,275** people were killed in the U.S. in distracted driving-related crashes. Around **300** of those crashes occurred in Florida.

**34%** of drivers admit to reading texts or emails while driving, and **23%** report that they regularly type and send messages

### The Three Types of Driving Distractions

 **VISUAL**  
Taking your eyes off the road

reading texts • checking GPS • fixing hair or makeup • looking for dropped items • adjusting dashboard settings

 **MANUAL**  
Taking your hands off the wheel

texting • eating or drinking • smoking • adjusting radio or climate control settings • grooming or adjusting clothing

 **COGNITIVE**  
Taking your mind off driving

talking on the phone or with passengers • being stressed • getting too involved in your podcast or favorite song on the radio

### Improving The Odds: Preventing Distracted Driving Incidents

#### FOR SAFETY MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS:

**Implement clear policies** that expressly prohibit use of devices while driving.

**Integrate distracted driving into safety programs** with new employee orientation, defensive driving courses, toolbox talks, newsletters, or social media campaigns.

**Promote technological solutions** by installing hands-free communication systems in all fleet vehicles, using trackers that detect unsafe driving behaviors, and encouraging employees to use "Do Not Disturb" settings on their phones while driving.

#### FOR INDIVIDUALS:

**Prepare before driving** by silencing notifications, adjusting dashboard settings, setting up navigation systems, and securing loose items before they become a distraction.

**Focus on the act of driving.** Keep eyes on the road and hands on the wheel. Use hands-free phone and GPS settings. Ask passengers to navigate or respond to messages for the driver.

*Anything else can wait. If it can't wait, pull over.*

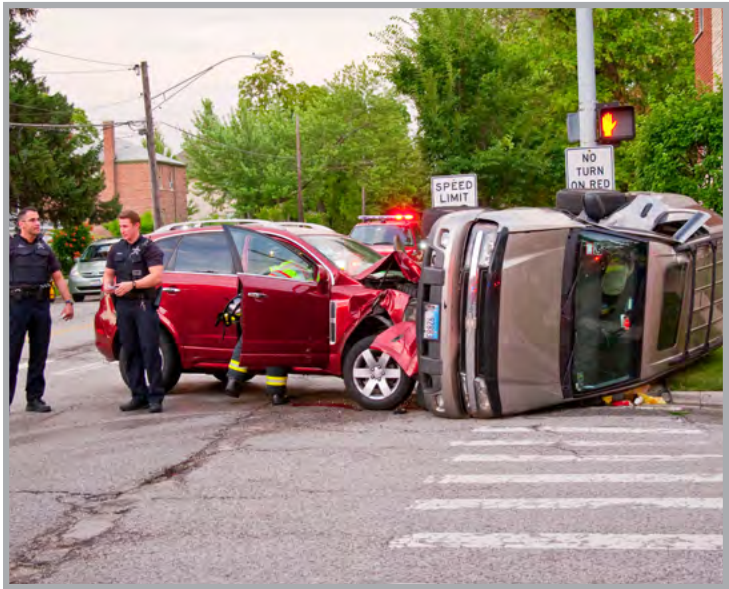
**DID YOU KNOW?**



**Drivers who text while driving are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than those who save texting for a safer time.**

# Roadway crashes lead to costly claims, workers' comp report shows

In the News | December 2025  
Safety + Health Associate Editors  
Barry Bottino, Kevin Druley, & Alan Ferguson



BOCA RATON, FL — Motor vehicle crashes are the most expensive type of workers' compensation lost-time claim, costing over 70% more than the average lost-time claim, a new report reveals.

Using National Council on Compensation Insurance's Statistical Plan data from 2002 to 2022, report author Brian Stein, an assistant actuary at NCCI, found that motor vehicle crashes account for just 5% of lost-time workers' compensation claims. However, the average cost of these claims exceeds \$100,000.

"Large losses are one part of the story," Stein adds. "The share of claims costing over \$1 million due to motor vehicle accidents has more than tripled in the past two decades."

One reason: Motor vehicle crashes are more than twice as likely as other claims to result in multiple injured

body parts. Other reasons include involvement of heavier vehicles for workplace use, higher speeds in crashes, and multiple workers or claimants involved.

"According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, almost one-third of jobs require some amount of driving, meaning the workforce has significant exposure to motor vehicle accidents," Stein says.

Transportation incidents were the leading cause of workplace deaths in 2023, accounting for 1,942 deaths, or nearly 37% of total workplace fatalities, according to the most recent BLS data available.

The National Safety Council offers driver safety training at [nsc.org/safety-training/defensive-driving](https://nsc.org/safety-training/defensive-driving).



# Electrical safety in construction: OSHA unveils new initiative

News Top Stories | March 13, 2026 | Safety + Health Staff

WASHINGTON — As part of its ongoing effort to bolster electrical safety in the construction industry, OSHA has launched the Electrical Roll Up Initiative.

The initiative is aimed at promoting basic **electrical safety** awareness throughout the industry.

"Electrical hazards affect more than just electricians," OSHA says in an **electrical safety toolbox talk**. "In fact, 74% of workplace electrical fatalities occur in

nonelectrical occupations. Many employees may not be trained to perform electrical work and may not recognize electrical hazards.

"Electrical work should only be assigned to qualified employees, as they are trained to work on or near energized parts. They have the knowledge, skills and training to perform electrical work. A competent person is someone who can identify hazards and has the authority to correct them."

The toolbox talk also notes that construction laborers; roofers; heating, ventilation and air conditioning mechanics; and construction/maintenance painters are among the ten occupations that account for the most electrical-related workplace fatalities.

Among the agency's other resources is a fact sheet featuring safety measures using the **Hierarchy of Controls** and workplace best practices.

OSHA also has five tips for using extension cords (see below) and a **PowerPoint presentation** that provides an overview of the initiative.



"Users can customize these materials and use them for their training," the agency says.

Originally published in Safety + Health Magazine  


## EXTENSION CORDS

### 5 THINGS TO KNOW

- 1 Use factory-assembled cord sets.**  
They provide quality assurance and manufacturing standards to keep workers safe. The sets often have warranties and other guarantees.
- 2 Use only extension cords that are 3-wire type.**  
Extension cords must be 3-wire type to be grounded and permit grounding of any tools or equipment connected to them. A wet cord connector, especially if damaged or improperly sealed, allows electric current to escape from the live parts of the connector. Workers can be impacted if they touch the connector or a grounded object. A Leakage can occur not just on the face of the connector, but at any wet surface on the equipment. Limit excessive moisture exposure of connectors and tools by using watertight or sealable connectors and consider using a portable GFCI.
- 3 Use only extension cords that are marked with a designation code for hard or extra-hard usage.**  
The OSHA construction standard requires flexible cords to be rated for hard or extra-hard usage. Examples of these codes are S, ST, SO, and STO for hard service, and SJ, SJO, SJT, and SJTO for junior hard service.
- 4 Use only cords, connection devices, and fittings that are equipped with strain relief and remove cords from receptacles by pulling on the plugs, not the cords.**  
Flexible cords must connect to devices and to fittings in ways that prevent tension at joints and terminal screws. Straining a cord can cause the strands of one conductor to loosen and touch another conductor.
- 5 Continually inspect cords on-site.**  
Any cords not marked for hard or extra-hard use, or which have been damaged or modified, must be removed from service immediately. A flexible cord may be damaged by door or window edges, by staples and fastenings, by abrasion from adjacent materials, or simply by aging. If the electrical conductors become exposed, there is a danger of shocks, burns, or fire.


• OSHA.gov/electrical • 1-800-321-OSHA (6742)


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If you would like to receive future issues of the OUTLOOK directly in your inbox, send us your email address by clicking the link above. You can also email us with your comments or suggestions. We appreciate your feedback!

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