

# Staying Safe: Address Heat-Related Risks Before It's Too Late

*from the Lake Charles Memorial Health System*



Lake Charles

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Memorial Health System

Emergencies and disasters can strike at any time and threaten the health and safety of employees. Whether it's a fire, chemical spill, natural disaster, or a structural failure, it's essential to understand common workplace injuries that occur during emergencies to take proactive measures that can significantly reduce risks to your employees' health.

**Lake Charles Memorial Health System** experts outline practical strategies for employers to keep their workforce safe during emergencies to avoid a medical emergency.

## **Address Heat-Related Risks Before It's Too Late**

In southwest Louisiana heat-related illness is among the highest risks to individuals during some parts of the year. During an emergency or recovery time after the fact, those working may be at risk of heat exhaustion, dehydration, or heat stroke.

Heat dissipation happens naturally through sweating and increased blood flow to the skin. Workers cool down more rapidly if the external (environmental) heat and physical activity (metabolic heat) are reduced. If heat dissipation does not happen quickly enough, the internal body temperature keeps rising and the worker may experience symptoms that include thirst, irritability, a rash, cramping, heat exhaustion, or heat stroke.

### **To reduce the risk of heat related illness:**

- **Provide Hydration:** Make sure water stations are available, particularly in environments with high heat or during physically demanding work. It is recommended to drink a cup of cool water every 20 minutes, even if you do not feel thirsty.
- **Establish Cooling Zones:** Designate cooling areas where employees can take breaks and cool down if exposed to high temperatures during an emergency.