

## Summer and Hot Weather Health Hazards

This time of year temperatures are soaring and risk of heat related injury or illness becomes a hazard. The primary health hazards associated with extreme temperatures are:

- **Sun Burn and Skin Disease** – Sunburn is painful at best, but more importantly prolonged exposure is recognized as leading to melanoma, skin cancer, wrinkles and sunspots. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer. Melanoma, the most serious form, accounts for 4 percent of skin cancer cases but causes 79 percent of skin cancer deaths, according to the American Cancer Society. *Prevention is simple.* Prevent sunburns and skin cancer by limiting exposure. Use broad-spectrum sunscreens with a protection factor of 15 or higher that have a UVA and UVB block on the label. For the “hair-challenged”, wear a hat to protect your head. Most truck drivers are well aware of “the truck driver’s tan”, the left arm only. Wear protective clothing to reduce exposure. As possible, avoid prolonged periods of exposure.
- **Heat Stroke and Heat Exhaustion** – Any time the temperature rises to 90 degrees or above, the danger exists for heat stroke or exhaustion. *Heat stroke* often appears quite suddenly and is characterized by collapse, delirium or coma. Characteristics include diminished sweating; dry, hot skin and flushed face; rapid pulse; headaches, dizziness and irritability, nausea and vomiting; an extra high body temperature and an extremely rapid pulse. *Heat exhaustion* symptoms are different from heat stroke in that the skin normally is cold, clammy and covered with perspiration instead of hot and dry. The face is pale; other symptoms include a headache, loss of appetite, drowsiness, cramps of the limbs and abdominal muscles, faintness or unconsciousness. The pupils of the eyes are sometimes dilated. Recognize the symptoms and take appropriate actions, both are serious conditions that can be fatal under certain circumstances.

To prevent heat stroke and exhaustion, your body needs to acclimate itself to new temperatures. The process can take five to seven days. During that time your body will adjust with continued exposure and heat will become endurable. The next best thing you can do is to drink plenty of water. You may need to drink as much as a quart of water per hour to keep your body sufficiently hydrated in hot weather. *Remember that caffeine or alcohol actually defeats your body’s ability to retain hydration.*