



REGION 5 NBA REPORT

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National Business Agent's Report

NALC Region 5

Heat Prevention Water... Rest... Shade...

Although I have previously discussed Heat Safety in my NBA report I have decided to dedicate this month's article to Heat Safety. It is by far one of the most important issues affecting the safety and health of letter carriers across the country. Most of this report was authored by Region 5's own Richard Thurman who has a Master's Degree in occupational safety. I thank him for this contribution and for assisting letter carriers across the country on behalf of the NALC.

Heat waves are more deadly than tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes combined. Water. Rest. Shade is an OSHA-related heat prevention program that reminds employers and workers of the importance of each step of the program to help prevent heat-related illnesses. The initial point is critical, and each person should consider the fundamental nature of proper hydration. The "Water. Rest. Shade." elements are simple yet essential to worker safety.

The delivery of mail cannot be done without you. It is an understated fact that you all are important as United States Postal Service employees. Suppose one does not understand the signs and symptoms of your body. In that case, you're starting from an extremely negative point of view that can be physically detrimental or deadly based on its immediacy. It does not take long for things to escalate very rapidly. Unfortunately, we have seen numerous cases of individuals having heatstroke or heat-related events in conjunction with this summer's current weather stream.

So, let us take a moment and understand what should occur first and foremost; each person must know that you must hydrate before reporting to work that day. Suppose you are returning from a seven-day vacation or extended absence—your requirements to acclimate to the weather are paramount. The post office does not have a written weather acclimation program. You cannot trust your supervisor to be aware of the safety protocols to have taken the class, which equips management to diligently work toward addressing this safety issue when the temperature exceeds 80° and not given weight of responsibility.

There are heat index tools for you to utilize to help calculate the heat index for the worksite and determine risk levels for outdoor work activities to ensure your safety. When questioning your condition, these tools are offered on the OSHA website and the Safety Page of the National Association of Letter Carriers. You can download the OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool app, which is available for iPhone and Android users. This app also provides reminders about protective measures to prevent heat-related illnesses, such as drinking enough fluids, scheduling rest breaks, and planning for emergencies. You must safeguard your body.

Additionally, you must know when you have had enough. That is the sole decision made by the individual carrier, not management. Each person has different signs and symptoms related to what they have ingested. This includes tablets, liquid forms of medication, or even vitamins. Extreme heat events can also be detrimentally affected by the various caffeinated coffees, caffeine-based drinks, sugar-based beverages, or a particular style of food. Have you had specific signs or symptoms such as blurred vision, headaches, or dizziness? Listen to your body.

Another thing to be concerned with is your skin, which indicates that it is unable to cool your body; additionally, understanding your urine color from clear to dark will suggest that your body is expelling or retaining fluids, determining your ability to rehydrate, and preventing the possibility of having a life-threatening dehydration occurrence is your responsibility. Lastly, this craft exposes carriers to extreme weather conditions, which does not mean your body has built up resistance. You must understand your body and take things seriously. Management motives are counter-productive to your safety. Remember Water. Rest Shade.

Today the US Department of Labor (DOL) released a proposed rule with the goal of protecting millions of workers from the significant health risks of extreme heat. This new rule would require employers to establish a Heat Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (HIIPP) that includes specific elements outlined in the proposed rule necessary to protect workers from the dangers of excessive heat.

This proposed rule will be published in the Federal Record and will call for public comments. The DOL also anticipates public hearing after the close of the written comment period.

For more information on how to provide comments at this stage of the process, visit

<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/rulemakingprocess#v-nav-tab2>.

We need help getting this message to every carrier on the workroom floor so that we can ensure carriers' safety is taken care of in extreme heat conditions. Don't be a hero! If you feel "off" while working in the heat, say something. Report it to management and insist on being seen by a medical professional. Only a medical professional can diagnose a heat injury. Pushing yourself to complete your route or overtime can lead to a tipping point where medical intervention will not help. If you have any resistance by the service where you believe the heat is affecting you, contact your local branch president or call the NBA office at 314-985-8040. Take care of yourselves this summer, remember...Water...Rest...Shade.

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