



TOOLBOX TALK:

Heat & Mental Health



HEAT & MENTAL HEALTH

STANDUP

In the Dehydration & Mental Health toolbox talk, we discussed that heat and dehydration don't just affect your muscles and your body; they also affect your brain.

As your body works harder to cool itself, it begins releasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. At the same time, the brain becomes less efficient at processing information and regulating mood.

The result isn't always obvious.

Instead of looking sick, someone experiencing the effects of heat may simply appear:

- More irritable than usual.
- Easily frustrated.
- Distracted or forgetful
- Less focused.
- Slower to react.
- More likely to take risks or make poor decisions.

These changes can occur before someone experiences a heat-related illness and may increase the likelihood of incidents, injuries, and conflicts on the jobsite.

Heat can also interfere with important brain chemicals responsible for mood, sleep, and concentration. Combined with physical fatigue, these changes can reduce a person's ability to cope with normal jobsite stress.

Recognizing these early changes is just as important as recognizing the physical signs of heat stress.

If you notice yourself, or a coworker, becoming unusually frustrated, distracted, forgetful, or mentally fatigued:

- Move to a cooler area.
- Rehydrate.
- Take a recovery break.
- Check in with one another.
- Speak up before a small issue becomes a serious incident.

Heat affects more than just your body. It can affect how you think, communicate, make decisions, and respond to stress. Protecting yourself from heat also means protecting your mental performance and helping everyone on the jobsite stay safe.

Discussion Questions:

1. Is it always obvious when someone is being affected by the heat?
2. What are some things you can do to cool off quickly?