Summer is right around the corner and its heat is arriving ahead of time in many places here in California. And just as heat shows up with summer, so does the Cal/OSHA “heat sweeps” program. Compliance officers have begun visiting farms and job sites to make sure employers are complying with Section 3395 of Title 8, “Heat Illness Prevention in Outdoor Places of Employment.” [http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/3395.htm](http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/3395.htm)

There has been much discussion about this standard and many proposed changes have been suggested but at this time, the original standard is what we are following. Without restating the entire standard, here are the crucial portions that each employer should be certain are in place:

1) The biggest hit employers have been taking is failing to train their employees:
   - About personal risk factors
   - Company procedures for complying with the standard
   - The importance of frequent consumption of water (up to 4 cups/hour)
   - Employees becoming acclimatized to the work area
   - The different types of heat illnesses
   - Immediate reporting of possible heat illness in any of the workers
   - The employer’s response to these emergencies
   - The employer’s procedures for contacting emergency services/providers with clear and precise directions to the work site

2) Training also has to include the supervisors; they must know all of the above items, as well as how the supervisor will implement the standard on the work site and what procedures the supervisor will follow should an employee exhibit signs of heat illness. Employers would be very wise in training their supervisors to follow weather reports in order to respond to hot weather advisories.

3) It’s extremely important to have these procedures, and how the employer is going to comply with them, in a written form and available to employees. Obviously, the water used during wet cutting can create additional hazards. For this reason, a dust reduction system is not required for rooftop operations with roofing tile, roofing pavers, or similar materials. However, you still must protect workers in the area from exposure through the use of personal protective equipment or other means. If the tools used during wet cutting are electrically powered, appropriate precautions need to be taken against electric shock.

4) It’s extremely important to have these procedures, and how the employer is going to comply with them, in a written form and available to employees.

5) Shade has to be available for employees; while the standard doesn’t have a specific temperature, it is highly advised to have it up once the temperature reaches 85 degrees. Note that an automobile or truck isn’t considered “shade” if the engine and air conditioner aren’t operating. Employees must be allowed access to this shade for at least five minutes, as often as needed. Non-agricultural employers can use misting machines or other cooling devices in lieu of the shade but this is not the case for agricultural employers.

6) Water is one of the most crucial aspects of heat illness prevention. It is almost impossible to consume too much water in high-heat conditions. Employers must plan to have enough water on site to allow each employee to have at least one quart of water per working hour. That’s a lot of water! A good test to determine whether employees have been drinking enough water is to find out how many times the employee has had to
urinate over a certain period of time. An employee who hasn’t used the restroom within a 3-hour work period probably hasn’t been drinking enough water. Note that electrolyte replacement drinks such as Gatorade are not required and that sodas, coffee and other drinks are not considered good substitutes for plain water. Plus, the water should be “cool”, clean and of a quality that everyone will be willing to drink it.

7) Cal/OSHA has said the individual 12-ounce bottles of water are perfectly acceptable for a company’s water supply because the bottles are a measured amount, can be kept clean (as opposed to a container such as an Igloo which invites dirt) and are easily carried by an employee. Some of these bottles even have a space on the label where the employees can write his/her name.

Remember that heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat syncope and heat stroke are all heat-related illnesses and the first three are precursors to heat stroke, which can be fatal. Don’t let your company and your employees become statistics this summer. Keep your employees and yourself well hydrated. The alternative is a killer.

QUESTIONS
If you have questions or concerns, please contact Kate Smiley, Safety & Health Manager at (916) 371-2422 or smileyk@agc-ca.org.