

# Agricultural Safety Awareness Program

## Farm Safety First



### Avoiding Heat and Sun-related Illnesses



#### *Did you know that...*

- Heat-related illnesses are responsible for hundreds of deaths in the United States each year, including the deaths of young and healthy adults.
- Farmers and farm workers who spend long hours outdoors in hot conditions are at high risk of heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and other heat-related illnesses.
- Skin cancer, due predominantly to exposure to the sun, kills approximately 9,800 people in the U.S. each year. However, most of these deaths *can* be prevented.



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See next page for  
a safety checklist.

# Checklist for Heat and Sun Protection

## Heat-related Illnesses

- ❑ **Know that heat exhaustion and other heat-related illnesses can occur even when the outside temperature isn't extremely high.** Use the National Weather Service's heat index (which combines air temperature and relative humidity) to tell you how hot it actually *feels*. \*
- ❑ **Drink small amounts of water every 20 to 30 minutes when the threat of heat illness is high.** Avoid coffee, other drinks with caffeine, and alcohol, which increase your risk of heat illness.
- ❑ **Be sure you and your workers are acclimatized to working in the heat.** Know that persons who are over 40, overweight, in poor physical condition, or have a past history of heat illness are often more sensitive to the heat.
- ❑ **Choose the coolest possible personal protective equipment (PPE) when applying pesticides or other chemicals in hot, humid conditions.** Read the product label for the minimum amount of PPE that's required.
- ❑ **Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing that reflects the heat and allows your body to release heat.** Materials such as cotton or cotton/polyester blends "breathe" and allow air circulation.
- ❑ **Take sufficient breaks out of the sun when the heat index is high.** Also, try to schedule your most strenuous tasks early in the morning or later in the day.
- ❑ **Train your workers to recognize the signs of heat-related illnesses, and to respond appropriately.** Know that heat stroke – characterized by excessively high body temperature, confusion, irrational behavior, slowed down or no sweating, rapid breathing and pulse (if conscious), and possible convulsions – can occur suddenly and is a *life-threatening medical emergency*. Call 911 immediately if heat stroke is suspected.
- ❑ **Know that the symptoms of heat exhaustion and organophosphate (OP) poisoning are very similar, but their treatments are very different.** Call 911 if you suspect either but are uncertain.



## Sun Protection

- ❑ Wear a loosely woven long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and a hat with a brim that shades your ears, face, temples and neck when working outdoors in the hot sun.
- ❑ Use sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 or higher. Apply it to your face, neck, forearms, hands, and other unprotected areas of the skin 20 to 30 minutes before going outdoors. Then reapply it during the day.
- ❑ Know that zinc oxide will help protect you against ultraviolet radiation. However, do not use zinc oxide on your children if they have shown any signs of allergic skin reaction.
- ❑ Wear shaded goggles or sunglasses that filter at least 90 percent of the sun's ultraviolet rays.
- ❑ Try to limit the amount of time you spend in the sun. Take breaks indoors or in the shade.
- ❑ Know that you are susceptible to skin damage and skin cancer due to sun exposure even if you have dark hair and dark skin. You can also get sunburned on a cloudy day or if you are in the water.
- ❑ Regularly check your head, neck, face, lips, tips of your ears, palms of your hands, and soles of your feet for possible signs of skin cancer. Do this at least monthly.
- ❑ See a doctor if you find any of these possible symptoms of skin cancer: any change on the skin, including new growths or a change in the size, shape, color or sensation of a mole; scaliness, oozing, bleeding, or a change in the appearance of a bump or nodule; red patches or bumps, including a small bump on the head; or a mole that is asymmetrical, has an irregular border, colors that aren't uniform throughout, or is bigger than a pencil eraser.

*\* The National Weather Service's heat index can be accessed on the Internet at: [www.crh.noaa.gov/pub/heat.htm](http://www.crh.noaa.gov/pub/heat.htm)*



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