

Working in hot weather: Employers asked to help workers

Employers need to act to make sure their workers are protected during periods of extreme hot weather this summer.

That's the message from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – the country's workplace regulator.

The UK Health Security Agency and the Met Office have issued a yellow heat-health alert for the coming days (Friday June 9 through to Monday June 12). The alert is the first to be issued in 2023.

HSE says this alert – and the record high temperatures seen in Great Britain last summer – should prompt employers to take action to protect those working both inside and outside in extreme heat.

There is no legal maximum temperature for workplaces but the regulator is calling on employers to be responsible.

HSE saw a surge in people seeking advice during summer 2022 – with visits to its online hot weather working guidance increasing by nearly a thousand percent and the number of concerns relating to hot weather reported to HSE almost doubling in July, when temperatures exceeded 40°C for the first time in history.

Employers must assess risks to the health and safety of their workers by law, including risks from extreme weather such as heat waves. While there is no legal maximum temperature for workplaces, heat is classed as a hazard and should be treated like other hazards.

HSE says everyone – whether working indoors or outdoors – is at risk and employers should discuss with workers changes to manage the risk.

HSE is asking employers to consider simple and cheap measures such as:

- Making sure workplace windows can be opened or closed to prevent hot air from circulating or building up.
- Using blinds or reflective film on workplace windows to shade workers from the sun.
- Placing workstations away from direct sunlight and heat sources.
- Putting insulation around hot pipes and machinery.
- Offering flexible working patterns so workers can work at cooler times of the day.
- Provide free access to drinking water.
- Relaxing dress codes if possible.
- Providing weather-appropriate [personal protective equipment](#)
- Encouraging workers to remove [personal protective equipment](#) when resting (ideally in shaded areas) to cool off.

- Sharing information about the symptoms of heat stress and what to do if someone is affected.

Many firms are already taking steps to adapt to Great Britain's changing climate. Nottingham-based engineering firm CNTL Ltd found that measures as simple as changing the lightbulbs helped workers.

Dane Rawson, Director of CNTL Ltd, said: "The heat was getting unbearable so we brought everyone together to agree what we could do. We moved to flexible hours to suit staff. Some went with 5am to 1pm. We also replaced our lightbulbs to LEDs, which give off a lot less heat. Longer-term we're starting to think about work we can get done on the roof so it absorbs less heat."

John Rowe, HSE's Head of Operational Strategy, said: "Last summer should have been a wakeup call for all employers. Climate change means we're likely to get hotter summers and that could have a big impact on the workforce of this country, affecting everything from health of workers to productivity on construction sites.

"We know all employers are under pressure and we don't want to add to their burden but it's vital they think hard now about simple and cheap measures they can put in place to support workers should we see extreme heat again this summer.

"The extreme heat we experienced in 2022 isn't going away so sensible, supportive employers will be planning now how they should respond."

Ends

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk)
2. HSE news releases are available at: <http://press.hse.gov.uk>.
3. HSE guidance can be found at: [Temperature \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature)