



## OPERATIONAL CIRCULAR 105/2020

File: D19327

December 2020

### HEAT STRESS MANAGEMENT

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#### Key Message

Working in heat is a hazard that has a high risk of injury to personnel. All personnel are reminded to consider heat stress management at all phases of an incident, including pre and post incident. Heat stress management must be implemented as soon as practicable to minimise the impact of heat related illness.

#### What has happened

Previous fire seasons have resulted in operational personnel suffering from heat illness during incidents. DFES has established a Heat Stress Working Group to identify strategies to assist in the mitigation of the impacts of this hazard. DFES is establishing secondary and tertiary strategies to supplement primary heat stress management strategies.

#### What are primary heat stress management strategies?

Primary heat stress management strategies are options currently available for all personnel to implement at a local level. These strategies are applicable to all personnel, all hazards and all environments.

It is important to note that every person may be affected by, and recover from heat, in different ways. Any heat stress management strategy must always consider these individual differences.

Heat stress management options that can be adopted by crews today and include:

#### Pre-Incident

- Maintain hydration before responding to an incident.
- On days where the risk of heat stress is high, reconsider any physical fitness training or gym activities. External training or drills should be restricted or rescheduled to when climatic conditions are more suitable.
- During vehicle checks, ensure that appliance fridges/coolers/eskies are stocked with water and have been turned down to cool as low as possible (but not to freeze the water). Ensure adequate electrolyte additives are included and consider carrying additional drinking water.
- Ensure your heat illness prevention activities are planned around the 'feels like' temperature which is forecast by the BOM.

Target Audience: All operational personnel				
A	B	C	D	Vol
O.I.C. is to communicate content to all relevant personnel under their command, discuss implications, and sign appropriate box above. Once completed Circulars shall be filed on station and forwarded to Information Resources at the end of each financial year.				
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When responding to and during an incident

- Officers in Charge (OIC) should consider the need for donning the full suite of protective clothing prior to arrival at the incident to lower the risk of elevating body temperatures whilst travelling. This includes tunics (level 1 or 2), flash hoods, jackets or overalls. Note, this statement overrides the requirement of SOP 3.2.1 – Order of Dress/PPC Matrix which states OIC are to ensure crews turnout in the minimum PPE.
- Assist cooling when recovering, by sitting in an air conditioning (vehicle) or shade. Ensure tunic, over trousers and flash hoods, jackets, overalls and/or PPE are removed when appropriate.
- Wear PPE appropriate for your current and expected tasks. Where the level of PPE is contributing to your heat stress, inform your crew leader/OIC to discuss lower levels of PPE, reduced working duration times, or alternative tasking.
- Frequently drinking small amounts of the coldest possible water you can, including when travelling to the incident. This approach will assist in cooling your core body temperature.
- Be aware of your own heat stress and fatigue levels. Inform your crew leader/OIC of any heat stress and fatigue problems and take appropriate recovery actions.
- OIC/crew leaders should consider alternative operational strategies and tactics.

Post-Incident

- Remain hydrated.
- Drink the coldest possible water you can.
- Limit physical exertion.

All personnel are encouraged to view the video [‘Don’t Let Heat Stress Bring You Down’](#) for further information.

**CRAIG WATERS**  
**DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OPERATIONS**

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