



Summer working.

Taking advantage of the warmer weather and the longer days improves our health and wellbeing. It can lift our mood and allows us to get some vitamin D, which is vital for a healthy immune system.

Whether you're walking to or from work, enjoying your lunch break outside in the sun, or working outside all day, you need to make sure you are properly protected. Sunburn increases your risk of skin cancer. Sunburn doesn't just happen on holiday – you can burn in the UK, even when it's cloudy. Aim to strike a balance between protecting yourself from the sun and getting enough vitamin D from sunlight.

Sun safety tips

- Spend time in the shade when the sun is strongest. In the UK, this is between 11am and 3pm from March to October.
- Wear a high factor, SPF 30 or above, sun cream to protect against UVB rays and at least a four star UVA rating. Thames Water operations workers can order SPF factor 30 sun cream from the Liscombe catalogue.
- Wear sunglasses/ eye protection with wraparound lenses or wide arms with the CE Mark and European Standard EN 1836:2005.
- Cover up with suitable clothing:
 - a wide-brimmed hat that shades the face, neck and ears
 - a long-sleeved top
 - trousers or long skirts in close-weave fabrics that don't allow sunlight through



If you're on an operational site or carrying out a job that requires you to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) you need to follow the guidance in the next section.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) in the heat

It's our policy that hard hats, gloves, glasses, hi-vis and safety boots are worn as the minimum requirement in designated areas, on all operational sites and when working out in the field.

When the weather's warm it can be tempting to take off your PPE to keep cool. Please don't do this as it's there for your protection. Make sure you stay hydrated in the warm weather and use the correct PPE for the job.

If you are working in hot weather there is a risk you or your teammates could get heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Heat exhaustion is not serious and usually gets better when you cool down. If it turns into heat stroke it needs to be treated as an emergency.

To help prevent heat exhaustion or heat stroke:

- plan physically demanding tasks during the cooler morning period
- keep in regular communication with your teammates
- ensure there is an adequate supply of cool drinks available – refrigerate drinks overnight and use cool bags and ice to keep them cool.
- make sure everyone takes suitable and sufficient breaks in shaded areas
- rotate people undertaking physical work to allow for rest and rehydration
- if you can, sprinkle water over skin or clothes

Don't ignore warning signs – if you are starting to feel unwell, stop what you are doing. The signs of heat exhaustion include:

- headache
- dizziness and confusion
- loss of appetite and feeling sick
- excessive sweating and pale, clammy skin
- cramps in the arms, legs and stomach
- fast breathing or pulse
- temperature of 38°C or above
- intense thirst



If someone is showing signs of heat exhaustion they need to be cooled down:

- call a first aider and move them to a cool place
- if it's safe (i.e. no chemical hazards etc.), remove layers of clothing
- get them to lie down and raise their feet slightly
- get them to drink plenty of water. Sports or rehydration drinks are OK
- cool their skin – spray or sponge them with cool water and fan them. Cold packs around the armpits or neck are good too
- stay with them until they are better



They should start to cool down and feel better within 30 minutes.

Call 999 if the person:

- is no better after 30 minutes
- feels hot and dry
- is not sweating even though they are too hot
- has a temperature that's risen to 40C or above
- has rapid or shortness of breath
- is confused
- has a fit (seizure)
- loses consciousness
- is unresponsive



These can be signs of heat stroke. While you wait for help, keep giving first aid and put them in the recovery position if they lose consciousness.

Hydration

Our brains are about 70% water and our bodies around 60% water, so dehydration can affect how we feel and perform at work.

Even a reduction in hydration levels of as little as 2% can influence your mood, make you feel tired and reduce your alertness.

Hydration tips

- Aim to drink six to eight glasses of fluid at regular intervals throughout the day to stay hydrated.
- Water, lower fat milk and sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.
- 20-30% of your daily fluid intake can also come from food, like fruit and vegetables.
- Sip water in small amounts before, during and after exercise.
- Watch for changes in hydration by checking the colour of your urine. It should be pale straw colour. Anything darker is a sign you need to drink more.
- If you are feeling tired, have a headache or are experiencing any other signs of dehydration, try having a glass of water as a first step.
- If you are reducing the amount of fluid you drink because you are concerned about the lack of toilet facilities, please speak to your local health and safety advisor.



Alcohol

It's estimated that nearly three in every 10 UK adults drink more alcohol when the weather gets warmer. Make sure you know your limits and aren't drinking more than the government's health guidelines for alcohol (men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis).

Alcohol is a diuretic and can have the effect of making you sweat more. The combination of sweating more in the heat and going to the toilet more regularly means you could lose more fluid than you take in and become dehydrated, so always try to drink water and soft drinks in between alcoholic drinks.



at Thames Water, our 'Zero Compromise' health and safety approach extends to the use or misuse of alcohol. Whilst we have no desire to control what employees do in their spare time, the effects of alcohol may extend beyond recreational time into working time, and can adversely affect safety, judgment, behaviour, capability, productivity, and health. Our ability to 'Take Care' of our employees and to ensure a safe working environment will be assessed. It is our intention, wherever reasonable, to support those who suffer from alcohol dependency.



Sleep and fatigue

On a hot day in the summer, longer daylight hours and uncomfortable night temperatures can disrupt our normal sleeping patterns and leave us feeling irritable and lethargic which can affect how we feel and perform at work.

Sleep experts suggest the ideal bedroom temperature for sleep is around 15-18°C. Our body temperature needs to drop slightly for us to have a really good night's sleep. A hot stuffy bedroom doesn't help.

Summer sleep tips

- Close the curtains during the day to keep out the sun and opening up the windows in the evening to let in cooler air.
- Freeze a bottle of water or fill a pan with ice cubes, then simply place in front of your fan to act as a creative aircon system. As the ice melts the fan picks up and blows around the cold mist.
- Water helps keep us cool and hydrated, however it's best to avoid drinking any drinks an hour before bed as this may lead to wake in the night needing the toilet. Instead have a glass of water by your bed for if you wake with a thirst.



If you are still having problems sleeping, try the NHS sleep self-assessment tool which has practical advice and tips on what to do next.



Air conditioning

Keeping cool during warm weather is always a challenge, but some of our offices and sites have air conditioning or fans available.

If you share an office space, it is important to remember that other people may not be as warm as you are, or could even be cold. Opening windows or propping doors open to let fresh air in can be tempting, but this can cause security, noise or health issues (especially if people are suffering from hay fever) so always consider other's working in the same area as you.

