



STATE SAFETY OFFICE
HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
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SAFETY MESSAGE 22-07

July is Heat Injury Prevention Awareness

Heat is the leading cause of death among all weather-related phenomena, and it is becoming more dangerous as 18 of the last 19 years were the hottest on record. These medical conditions, referred to as heat illnesses or injuries, occur when the body is unable to compensate for increased body temperatures due to hot and humid environmental conditions and exertion. Military personnel are at risk, especially during outdoor training exercises that involve rigorous physical exertion. Physically intense military activities such as Basic Combat Training, field training exercises, and road marches over 8 kilometers are examples of high-risk activities. Physical training tests and running competitions are also risky events. Soldiers also usually must wear full uniforms, sometime with additional protective layers, and may carry heavy gear, which can further increase internal body temperatures.

The most severe condition is heat stroke, which can be fatal if not treated immediately and properly, though heat exhaustion is a less severe diagnosis, it could progress to heat stroke if the exposure is not stopped, and the condition not treated. Severe cases can be life threatening. Even mild illnesses can mean a person is at greater risk during future heat exposures.

The risk to Soldiers is highest when outdoor temperatures and humidity are high, which is the case at some of the Army installations where outdoor training occurs. Of the 43 Army installations tracked for the 2020 Health of the Force report, 10 experienced more than 100 heat risk days in 2019, mostly concentrated in the south and southeast U.S. There are an average of 2-3 heat-related Soldier deaths each year. The number of heat stroke and heat exhaustion cases among Soldiers decreased in 2019 compared to 2018 but was still higher than cases in the prior three years.

Soldiers are encouraged to use the buddy system and monitor each other's hydration and physical condition. Seeking medical help at the earliest signs or symptoms of a heat-related condition could save a life.

As the weather warms and outdoor training increases, Soldiers should remember their Heat Illness training and these tips from the APHC Heat Illness Factsheet to help protect themselves and others:

Use the Army Wet Bulb Globe Temperature index to determine WBGT Risk categories and develop plan ways to reduce the risk-

Consider ways to lighten loads and modify clothing to increase air circulation.

Consider conducting high-intensity activities when cooler such as at night, before sun up, or in shade.

Add 5°F to the WBGT for ruck sack or body armor and 10°F for full chemical protective gear to capture actual risk level.

Consider prior days' WBGT exposures since multiple days exposures often add risk.

Gradually increase exposure (e.g., 2 weeks or more) to warm climates and higher exertion in warm climates; increase rest periods during high exertion.

Follow Army Work/Rest and Water Consumption guidance, remembering not to exceed 1 quart/hour, or 1.5 quart/hour when doing intense physical activity since excessive water consumption could lead to a serious chemical imbalance called hyponatremia.

Assess first morning urine with urine color charts to assess adequate day-to-day fluid intake.

Take personal risk factors into account – factors that increase risk of heat injury include previously having had a heat illness, not being adequately fit, currently being ill, ignoring early signs or symptoms, and/or having recently used alcohol or certain drugs (e.g., antihistamines, blood pressure medications, decongestants, antidepressants, and some diuretics).

For more information, see other APHC Heat Illness Prevention resources.

To find previously published Safety Messages go to our NYARNG Safety Website:

<http://dmna.ny.gov/safety/>

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