

# Employers Must Handle The Heat Intelligently

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Whether or not an employer believes that the earth is experiencing global warming, he or she must know that unrelenting, overwhelming heat can be devastating to its employees and, ultimately, to its bottom line. For companies with outdoor work, handling the heat isn't a luxury — it's a necessity.

Industries such as construction, landscape architecture, pool safety and maintenance, athletic field and golf course maintenance, and sports clinics welcome the warm weather for outdoor activities. But exposure to hot climate elements can be as damaging as the cold weather issues employees up north face when working outdoors during the winter months.

Every company which employs a substantial number of outdoor workers must review its policies. They can all take a page out of the NFL's handbook. The NFL altered its training operations after the death of Korey Stringer, who died from complications brought on by heat stroke during training camp in — of all places — Mankato, Minn. With the worst of the summer of 2011 still to come, protection of workers from direct exposure to the sun must be paramount.

Sadly, what does happen from time to time, without a good reason, employees resist their employer's efforts to ensure worker safety. This is when enforcement of company safety policies is crucial. Employers should not be hesitant to discipline employees who violate such policies, even if that may mean termination of employment. Enforcement sends a clear message to all other employees that the company is serious about safety.

Think first and act on it. Do not wait for a serious situation with a worker to occur and then focus on preventive measures. Put plans and policies in place, and make enforcement a meaningful part of your corporate culture.

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