

1 PURPOSE

To ensure risks associated with exposure to extremes in temperature are identified and adequately controlled.

2 SCOPE

This requirement applies to all staff and students at workplaces under the management or control of the University of Melbourne.

3 DEFINITIONS

Thermal comfort

Thermal comfort is defined as: "that condition of mind which expresses satisfaction with the thermal environment". A person's perception of thermal comfort is affected by air temperature, air movement (speed), humidity, clothing, activity level (the amount of physical work done), mean radiant temperature (the average temperature of the walls, floor, windows) and other factors.

4 REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Minimise thermal discomfort

Outdoor work activities should be arranged to take into account extended periods of excessive heat or cold. If practicable, work should commence and finish at times that avoid the greatest heat.

Other considerations for thermal discomfort are:

- the time staff are exposed to hot tasks is reduced through job rotation (frequent brief exposures are less stressful than fewer longer exposures);
- arranging extra ventilation to increase air movement is arranged;
- doors and windows are closed to the heat for all or part of the day to prevent hot winds entering the room or building;
- heat generating equipment such as screen-based equipment photocopiers and incandescent lights are turned off, where practicable;
- windows are covered with either blinds or reflective coating; and
- fans are used in areas of low ventilation.

4.2 Personal care

Staff are encouraged to take frequent cool drinks and discouraged from drinking alcoholic or caffeine-based drinks. Supervisors should ensure that there is cool water close to the affected areas.

Staff should be aware of compounding factors which can increase susceptibility to heat stress, such as pre-existing heart or circulatory problems, dehydration, fever or diarrhoea.

4.3 Working outdoors

Supervisors shall monitor working conditions and when working in heat becomes difficult, direct that certain tasks cease, allow staff to go home or move to a cooler environment.

Staff working outdoors should take the following precautions:

- use protective clothing, particularly covering the head. Head coverings should be wide brimmed hats rather than caps;
- wear sun glasses (UV protective safety glasses) for eye protection;
- use protective lotions on exposed parts of the body;
- arrange work patterns that maximise work in shady areas;
- avoid heavy work during the hottest part of the day;
- use personal water canteens; and
- drink 250 ml of water every half-hour.

4.4 Cessation of Work

Supervisors shall assess working conditions and the extent of staff discomfort on a regular basis. This is particularly important on the third and fourth days of periods where the outside temperature has been 35°C and greater. Based on assessment supervisors have the discretion to either place limitations on the work of their staff.

Where, after implementing controls to minimise thermal discomfort, working conditions continue to be adversely affected by prolonged, extreme heat, supervisors may cease all activities and send staff home under special leave arrangements.

5 REFERENCES

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)

Compliance code. Workplace amenities and work environment

6 RESPONSIBILITIES

Head of School/Division

Supervisor

7 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION

7.1 Processes

Nil

7.2 Forms

Nil

7.3 Guidance

[Safety Bulletin: Thermal comfort in winter - portable heaters](#)

[Safety Bulletin: Thermal comfort and heat illness \(stress\)](#)