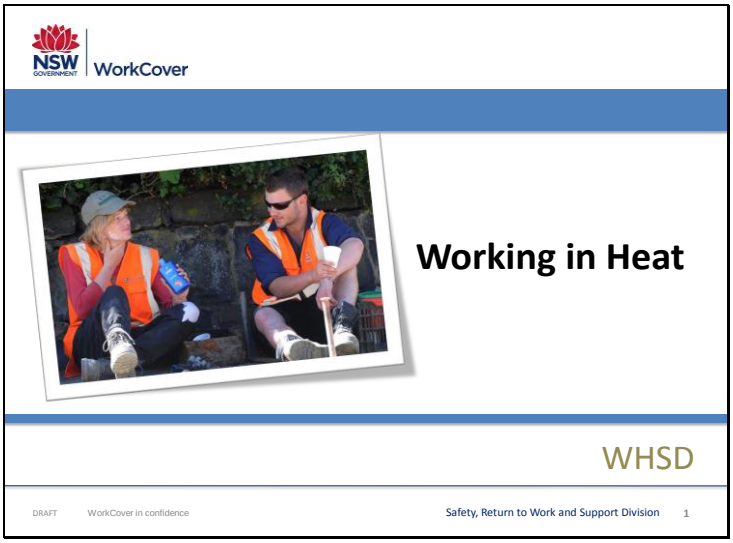
Slide 1


NSW GOVERNMENT
WorkCover
Working in Heat
WHSD
DRAFT
WorkCover in confidence
Safety, Return to Work and Support Division
1

Slide 2

NSW GOVERNMENT | WorkCover

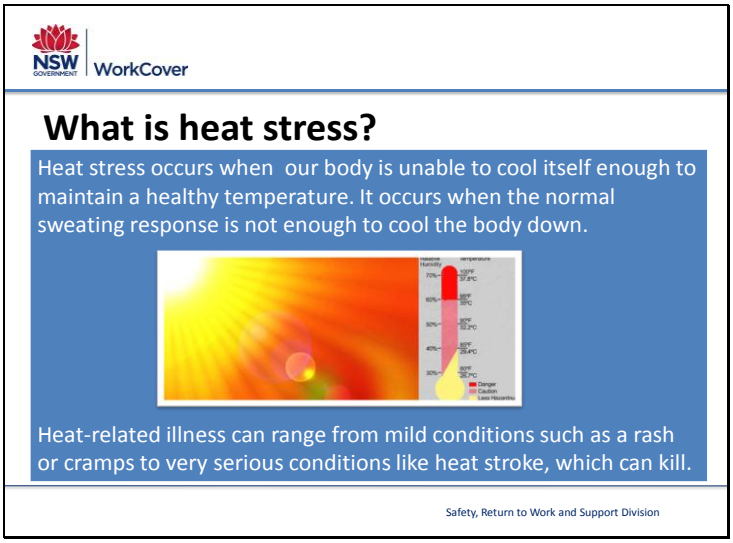
Purpose

This presentation provides practical advice on working in the heat and for dealing with heat illness and related health and safety problems at work.

It contains recommended actions and measures to prevent or minimise the likelihood of heat illness.

Safety, Return to Work and Support Division

Slide 3



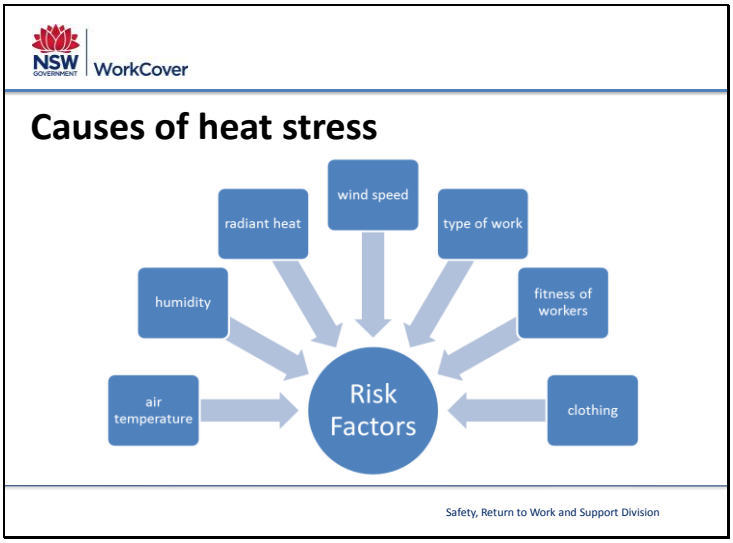
Workers who are exposed to extreme heat or work in hot environments may be at risk of heat stress.

Heat stress occurs when our body is unable to cool itself enough to maintain a healthy temperature. Normally, the body cools itself by sweating, but sometimes sweating isn't enough and the body temperature keeps rising.

When the body is unable to cope with working in heat workers are at risk of suffering a range of harmful medical conditions. These medical conditions, also known as heat illnesses, include:

- Painful cramps in muscles, caused by heavy sweating that uses up the body's supply of salt and water
- Heat exhaustion such as weakness, fatigue and dizziness
- Heat rash
- Heat Stroke which is a life threatening condition that requires immediate first aide and medical attention. It is usually caused by overexposure to heat and often with dehydration
- Heat stress can also make an existing medical condition worse

Slide 4

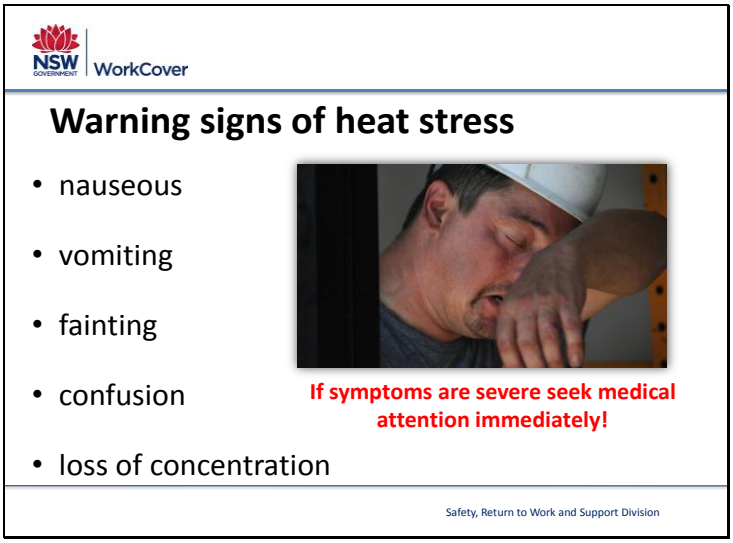


There are a number of risk factors that may contribute to heat illnesses at work. These risk factor include:

- air temperature
- humidity in the environment or workplaces - such as laundries and mines
- radiant heat from the sun or other sources - such as furnaces and ovens
- air movement or wind speed
- nature and duration of workload
- physical fitness of the worker - including whether a worker is used to working in a hot environment or has any pre-existing conditions such as weight issues, heart diseases, skin diseases or use of certain medicines
- clothing being worn - including protective clothing such as overalls

When identifying heat hazards and controlling heat risks, workers likely to be exposed to heat as well as any health and safety representatives (HSRs) who represent the workers, must be consulted.

Slide 5

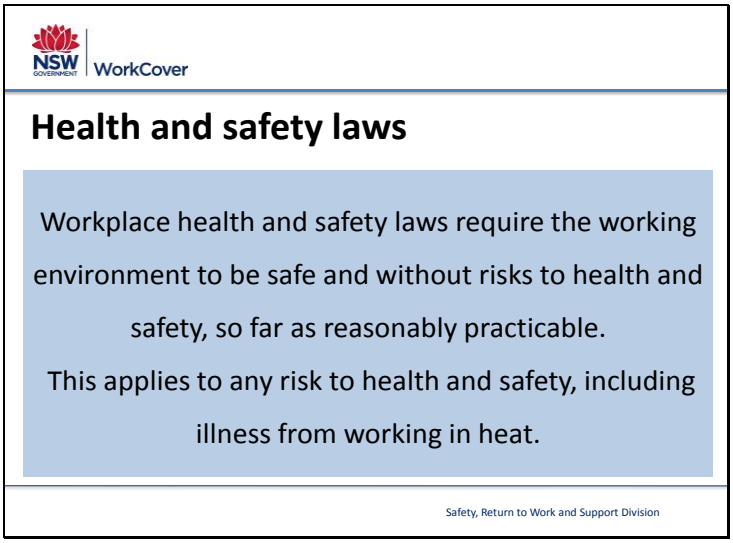


Some of the warning signs of heat stress are:

- Nauseous
- Vomiting
- Fainting
- Confusion
- Loss of concentration
- Weakness

If symptoms are severe or don't improve, a worker of his/her workmates must seek medical attention immediately.

Slide 6

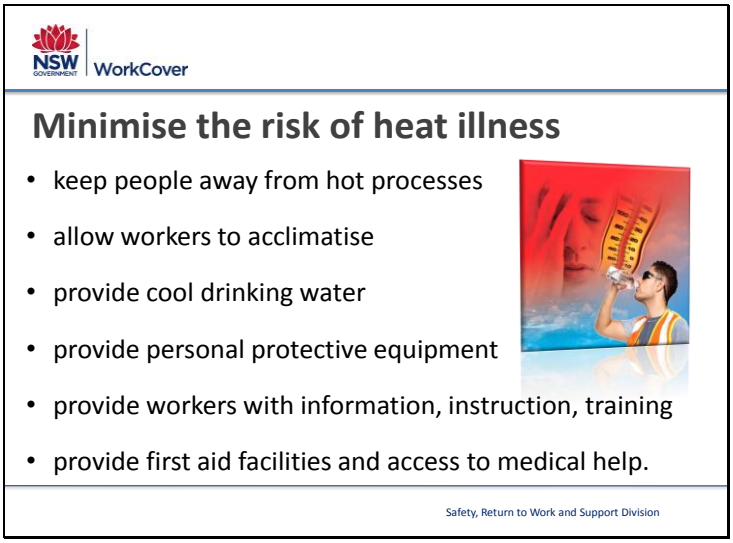


The Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 requires the Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that workers working in extremes of heat or cold are able to carry out their work without risk to their health and safety.

The Work Health and Safety legislation does not state a precise temperature at which workers should stop work. This is because the effects of exposure to heat depend on a number of factors – not just the temperature.

These other factors were identified in the previous slide.

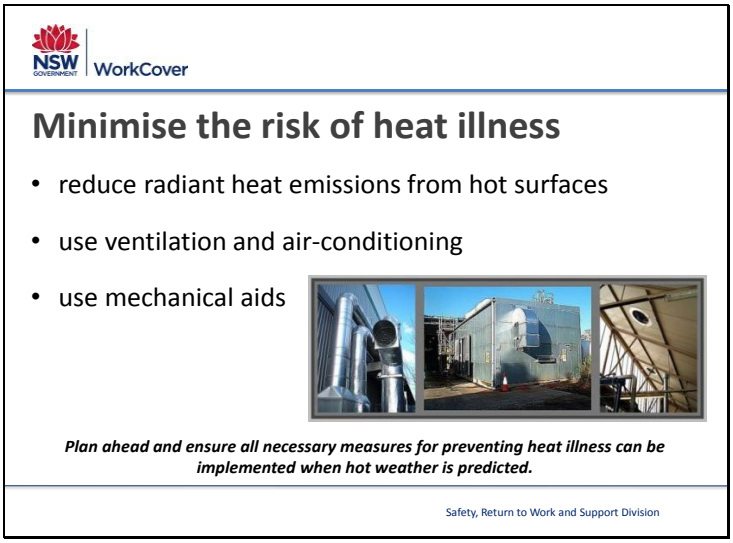
Slide 7



PCBUs can prevent heat illness by:

- keeping people away from hot processes
- allowing workers to acclimatise
- providing cool drinking water near the work site. - During hot weather, workers should be encouraged to drink a cup of water (about 200ml) every 15 to 20 minutes. Workers should not rely on soft drinks or coffee for fluids as they are high in sugar and causes frequent urination and result in more fluid loss from the body.
- providing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as reflective aprons and face shields for reducing exposure to radiant heat. Outdoor workers should be provided with protection against ultraviolet exposure, such as wide brim hat, loose fitting, long-sleeved collared shirt and long pants, sunglasses and sunscreen.
- providing workers with information, instruction and training on recognising heat-related illness and on first aid. Adequate supervision of workers is also required.
- providing first aid facilities and access to medical help.

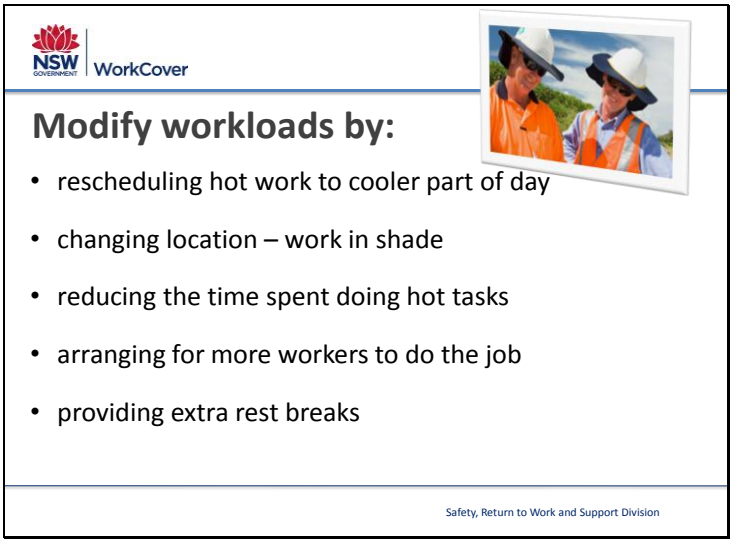
Slide 8



The risk to heat exposure can be minimised by using engineering solutions which include:

- reducing radiant heat emissions from hot surfaces and plant such as by insulation and shielding
- Using ventilation and air-conditioning when possible
- Using mechanical aids to reduce physical exertion

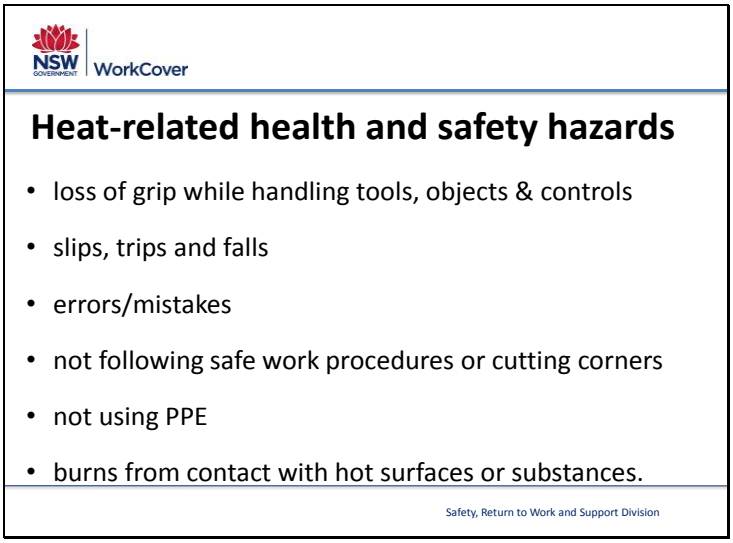
Slide 9



The risk can also be minimized by modifying workload. This may include:

- rescheduling work so that the hot tasks are performed during the cooler part of the day
- doing the work at a different location
- reducing the time spent doing hot tasks such as job rotation
- arranging for more workers to do the job
- Providing extra rest breaks in a cool area

Slide 10

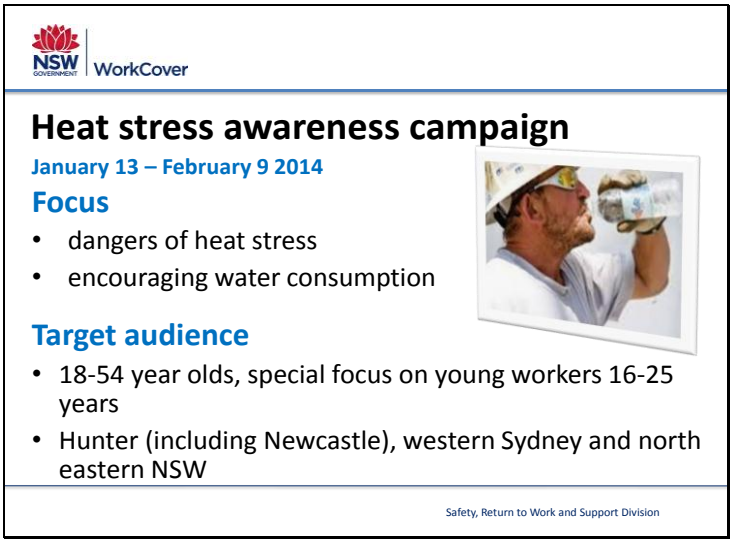


Apart from heat stress, hot working conditions may contribute to or cause other health and safety problems.

For example:

- loss of grip while handling tools, objects and controls due to sweaty hands
- slips, trips and falls due to dizziness, fainting or fatigue
- mistakes or clumsiness due to fogged up safety glasses or heat fatigue
- not following safe work procedures or cutting corners due to fatigue and/or discomfort
- not using PPE due to discomfort
- burns from contact with hot surfaces or substances

Slide 11

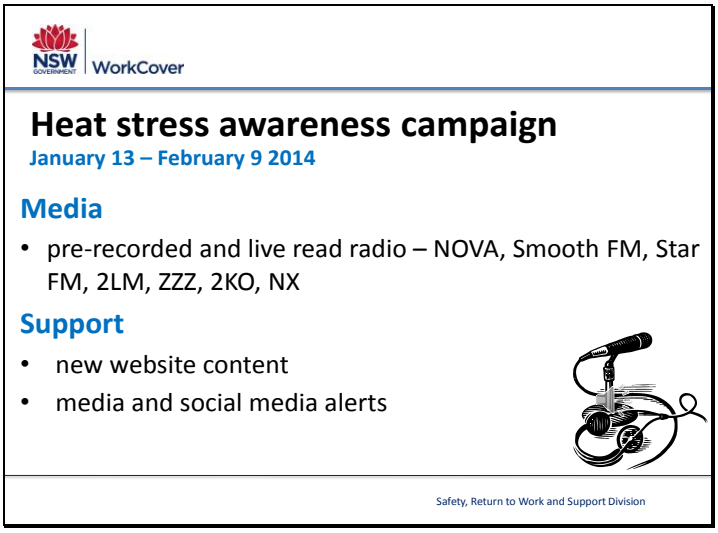


WorkCover's heat stress awareness campaign commenced on 13 January and will run for a period of 5 weeks.

The campaign targeted outdoor workers aged 18-54 with a special focus on young workers 16-25 years old. The campaign will run in the Hunter (including Newcastle), western Sydney and north eastern NSW. These target areas were decided upon by overlaying temperature mapping with populations of outdoor workers and then narrowing by our target age groups.

The campaign focused on the dangers of heat stress and encouraging water consumption.

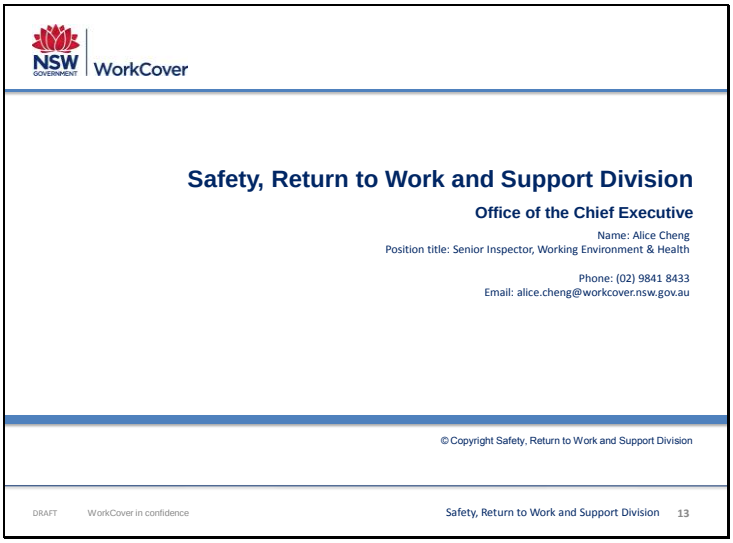
Slide 12



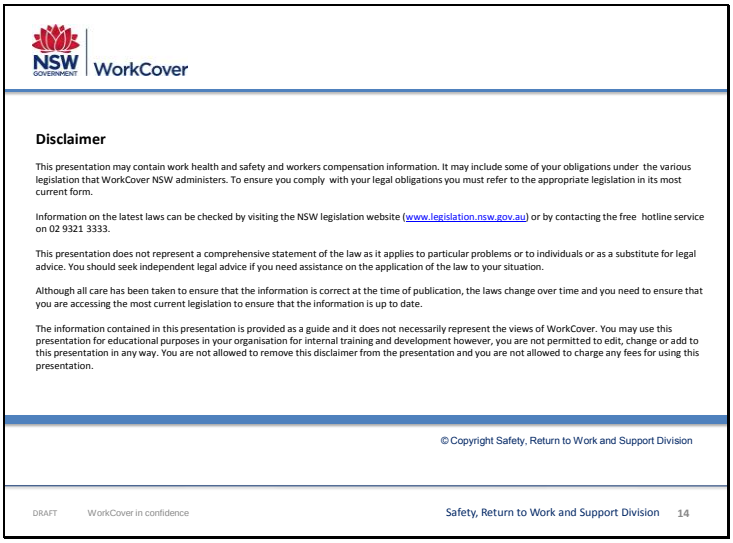
A combination of pre-recorded and 'live-read' radio scripts will be aired during the campaign period. Radio advertising will be aired in peak consumption periods of breakfast, morning and afternoon. In addition to the radio advertising, a digital mobile advertisement has also been developed and will be pushed out to the target areas on hot days.

PRESS ON GRAPHIC TO PLAY AUDIO CLIP OF RADIO AD.

Slide 13


NSW GOVERNMENT
WorkCover
Safety, Return to Work and Support Division
Office of the Chief Executive
Name: Alice Cheng
Position title: Senior Inspector, Working Environment & Health
Phone: (02) 9841 8433
Email: alice.cheng@workcover.nsw.gov.au
© Copyright Safety, Return to Work and Support Division
DRAFT
WorkCover in confidence
Safety, Return to Work and Support Division
13

Slide 14


NSW GOVERNMENT
WorkCover
Disclaimer
This presentation may contain work health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislation that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation in its most current form.
Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website (www.legislation.nsw.gov.au) or by contacting the free hotline service on 02 9321 3333.
This presentation does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.
Although all care has been taken to ensure that the information is correct at the time of publication, the laws change over time and you need to ensure that you are accessing the most current legislation to ensure that the information is up to date.
The information contained in this presentation is provided as a guide and it does not necessarily represent the views of WorkCover. You may use this presentation for educational purposes in your organisation for internal training and development however, you are not permitted to edit, change or add to this presentation in any way. You are not allowed to remove this disclaimer from the presentation and you are not allowed to charge any fees for using this presentation.
© Copyright Safety, Return to Work and Support Division
DRAFT
WorkCover in confidence
Safety, Return to Work and Support Division
14