

Employer's Guide to

# Hot Weather Health and Safety

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## Managing heat risks safely, practically, and proportionately

High temperatures can create significant health and safety risks in the workplace, particularly during periods of prolonged hot weather.

For employers, the challenge is not simply employee comfort. Heat can contribute to fatigue, reduced concentration, dehydration, workplace accidents, operational disruption, and increased risk for vulnerable workers.

While employers cannot control the weather, they are responsible for taking reasonable steps to protect employees from heat-related risks and maintaining safe working conditions.

Knowing what action to take can feel unclear for employers balancing legal duties, operational demands, and employee wellbeing. This guide outlines the key risks associated with hot weather, employer responsibilities, and practical control measures businesses can implement to help protect their workforce and maintain safe operations.

### ⬇ Risks associated with hot weather



Hot conditions can affect concentration, physical performance, decision-making, and overall workplace safety.

Employees working outdoors, carrying out physically demanding tasks, operating machinery, wearing PPE, or working in poorly ventilated environments may be at increased risk.

#### Heat-related workplace risks can include:

- Dehydration
- Fatigue and reduced concentration
- Dizziness or fainting
- Heat cramps
- Heat exhaustion
- Heat stroke
- Accidents and injuries

#### Outdoor workers are also exposed to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun, which can cause:

- Sunburn and blistering
- Premature skin ageing
- Long-term skin damage
- Skin cancer



Workers carrying out physically demanding tasks, wearing PPE, or exposed to direct sunlight may be at greater risk.

### Did you know?

More than **20,000 people** are diagnosed with melanoma skin cancer in the UK each year, and nearly **9 out of 10 cases** are caused by too much UV radiation from the sun and sunbeds.

Source: [Cancer Research UK](#)

## Employer responsibilities during hot weather

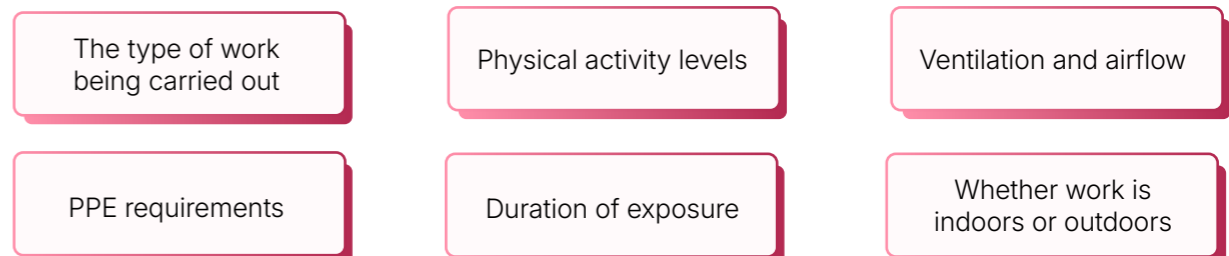
There is currently **no legal maximum workplace temperature** in the UK. However, employers have clear legal duties under health and safety legislation to protect employees from foreseeable risks, including excessive heat.

### Relevant legislation includes:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

These require employers to provide a workplace with a **"reasonable" temperature** and to take **reasonable steps** to protect employees from risks to their health and safety, including excessive heat and UV exposure.

What's considered a "reasonable" workplace temperature will depend on factors such as:



## The law versus best practice

While there is no legal maximum workplace temperature, most people work comfortably between **16°C and 24°C**.

TUC guidance recommends maximum temperatures of:

- **30°C** for most workplaces
- **27°C** for strenuous or manual work

Where the right response is not straightforward, WorkNest's Health & Safety, HR, and Employment Law specialists can help employers assess risk, interpret their responsibilities, and implement practical, proportionate measures that protect both their people and their business.

**Did you know?**

The UK's Climate Change Committee has called for maximum workplace temperature rules, warning that extreme heat is becoming a major health and safety risk for workers across the UK.

Source: [BBC](#)

## Recognising heat-related illness

Employees and managers should understand the warning signs of heat-related illness so action can be taken quickly.

### Early warning signs

- Excessive sweating
- Headaches
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Muscle cramps
- Fatigue or weakness
- Nausea
- Difficulty concentrating
- Heat rash

### Heat exhaustion

Symptoms may include:

- Giddiness
- Moist or clammy skin
- Extreme tiredness
- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Feeling faint

### Heat stroke – medical emergency

Symptoms may include:

- Confusion or disorientation
- Hot, dry skin
- Convulsions
- Loss of consciousness

Heat stroke can be fatal and requires immediate medical attention.



## What if employees say it's too hot to work?

Employers should take concerns about excessive heat seriously and investigate appropriately.

Employees may have legal protection under **Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996** if they reasonably believe there is a serious and imminent danger to health and safety.

This protection may apply where an employee:

- Leaves the workplace
- Refuses to return to work
- Takes appropriate steps to protect themselves or others

This **does not** mean employees can automatically stop work simply because they feel uncomfortable or too warm. However, employers should:

- Assess the risks
- Consider reasonable adjustments
- Consult with employees
- Record actions taken

### Hot weather HR issue?

From refusals to work to employees breaking safety rules or dress code policies, high temperatures can quickly create employee relations and workplace management issues.

Our Employment Law and HR experts can help you understand the legal position and navigate these situations carefully, reducing disruption and risk to your business.

[Request a callback.](#)

## Hot Weather Workplace Checklist

Use the checklist below to review workplace arrangements and identify practical steps to reduce heat-related risks.

Area	Checklist	Complete
Risk assessment and monitoring	Have heat and UV risks been assessed and reviewed?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are workplace temperatures and conditions monitored regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Have appropriate control measures been identified and implemented?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Area	Checklist	Complete
Indoor work environments	Are fans, ventilation or cooling systems available and working?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can airflow be improved safely through windows or doors?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are blinds, shading or reflective coverings used to reduce heat from sunlight?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can employees be moved away from direct sunlight or heat sources where possible?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outdoor work	Can strenuous outdoor work be rescheduled to cooler parts of the day?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are shaded work areas and cool/shaded rest areas available?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is cool drinking water freely available?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are employees encouraged to stay hydrated throughout the working day?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are employees encouraged to use sunscreen, hats and suitable lightweight clothing to reduce UV exposure?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can physically demanding outdoor tasks be reduced, rotated or rescheduled during periods of extreme heat?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rest breaks and working arrangements	Are additional rest breaks available during periods of extreme heat?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Could adjusted start and finish times help reduce heat-related risks where appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Could flexible hours or remote working help reduce heat-related risks where appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>

PPE and workwear	Has PPE suitability been reviewed for hot conditions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Could lighter or more breathable PPE be used where appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can PPE be safely removed during rest breaks to help employees cool down?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can dress requirements be temporarily relaxed where safe and appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vulnerable workers	Have additional support needs been considered for vulnerable workers, including pregnant workers, older workers, and those with underlying health conditions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication and awareness	Are lone workers monitored during periods of extreme heat?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do employees understand how to recognise the early signs and symptoms of heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are employees encouraged to raise heat-related concerns and consulted on suitable control measures?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is there a clear process for reporting heat-related concerns?	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Key reminders

**Take employee concerns seriously**

**Review risk assessments regularly**

**Encourage hydration and regular breaks**

**Monitor vulnerable workers closely**

**Communicate clearly with employees**

**Act quickly if signs of heat illness appear**



Unsure whether your control measures are appropriate or proportionate?

WorkNest's Health & Safety experts can help you sense check your approach and provide practical advice tailored to your workplace.

[Request a callback.](#)

## Supporting safe and productive workplaces during hot weather



Managing heat-related risks is rarely one-size-fits-all. Employers often need to balance health and safety responsibilities alongside operational demands, workforce needs, and practical workplace realities.

WorkNest supports employers to navigate heat-related risks and other workplace challenges confidently through practical, commercially-focused advice and hands-on support tailored to their organisation.

### Our experts can help with:



Practical guidance on managing heat-related health and safety risks in a proportionate way



Advice on responding to employee complaints, concerns, or refusals to work



Reviewing risk assessments, workplace policies, procedures, and control measures



Support balancing legal compliance, employee wellbeing, and operational continuity



With dedicated experts by your side all year round, you can make informed decisions faster, reduce disruption, minimise legal risk, and feel confident that workplace issues are being handled appropriately.

For more information on our fixed-fee Health & Safety, Employment Law and HR packages, **contact our team today:**



0345 226 8393



[Request a callback](#)



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