

STATE OF VERMONT AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS	Heat Mitigation		Page 1 of 7
CHAPTER: FACILITIES - GENERAL	#322	Supersedes: New	
<b>Local Procedure(s) Required:</b> No <b>Applicability:</b> All staff (including contractors and volunteers) <b>Security Level:</b> "B" – Anyone may have access to this document.			
<b>Approved:</b>			
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Nicholas J. Deml, Commissioner	Date Signed	Date Effective	

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## **Policy #322, Heat Mitigation**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to mitigate hazards of hot working environments for Department of Corrections (DOC) employees and incarcerated individuals.

### **AUTHORITY**

28 V.S.A. § 101

### **DEFINITIONS**

Cooling room: A designated space in the facility to provide staff relief from heat during breaks.

### **POLICY**

The DOC's policy is to implement efficient and safe work practices to prevent heat-related illnesses among staff and incarcerated individuals. The DOC acknowledges that many of the Vermont correctional facilities were not built for extreme heat and lack centralized air conditioning. Certain work activities at the DOC may expose staff to heat hazards, including working outdoors during hot and humid times of the year, working indoors with limited airflow, wearing personal protective equipment that limits the body's ability to regulate temperature, and working in environments where access to water and shaded or cooled break areas are limited or restricted. Incarcerated individuals may be exposed to heat hazards while housed in a correctional facility and may have activities canceled, rescheduled, or relocated to mitigate the risk of heat-related illness.

This policy's procedures align with recommendations found in the Criteria for Occupational Exposure to Heat and Hot Environments provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), as well as requirements outlined by the Vermont Occupational Health and Safety Administration (VOSHA).

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### VERMONT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ADMINISTRATION (VOSHA) REQUIREMENTS

The Superintendent, or designee, shall ensure the correctional facility complies with VOSHA requirements to:

1. Implement this policy's procedures whenever:
  - a. The National Weather Service issues a heat warning or advisory for the local county; or
  - b. The heat index in any indoor area or the outdoor environment of the correctional facility reaches 80 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
2. Educate staff on the components of the DOC heat-related illness prevention plan, via local training and internal communication methods to ensure staff are aware of heat mitigation strategies;
3. Inform staff about medical complications that may arise from the combination of heat with medications, illegal drugs and alcohol, or other health statuses, including pregnancy;
4. Consider and use heat protection equipment such as cooling vests, lightweight uniform shirts, and dampened cooling garments;
5. Establish "cooling rooms" where staff can take breaks in a cooled environment and ensure oscillating fans are used in all units; and
6. Provide ample and adequate access to cool drinking water and restrooms for staff, so staff may sufficiently hydrate.

### PREVENTING HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

#### A. Heat-Related Illness Education

1. The Security Operations Supervisor (SOS), or designee, shall provide staff with an annual "roll-call training" in May to educate staff on how heat-related illnesses may occur when workplace activities in a hot environment overwhelm the body's ability to cool itself. The training shall include information about:
  - a. The following risk factors, which increase the likelihood of heat-related illness:
    - i. Air temperature above 90 degrees Fahrenheit;
    - ii. Relative humidity above 40 percent;

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- iii. Radiant heat from the sun and other reflective sources such as windows, car surfaces, metals, and mirrors;
  - iv. Conductive heat sources such as dark-colored work surfaces like roofing materials, asphalt, and concrete;
  - v. Lack of air movement;
  - vi. Physical effort needed for the work; and
  - vii. Use of non-breathable protective clothing and other personal protective equipment; and
- b. Personal risk factors which may increase the likelihood of heat illness, including:
- i. A lack of acclimation to warmer temperatures;
  - ii. Poor general health;
  - iii. Dehydration or overhydrating. Drinking extreme amounts of water can also be harmful (more than 12 quarts in a 24-hour period);
  - iv. Alcohol consumption;
  - v. Caffeine consumption;
  - vi. A previous heat-related illness; and
  - vii. Use of prescription medications that affect the body's water retention or other physiological responses to heat, such as beta blockers, diuretics, antihistamines, tranquilizers, and antipsychotics.

### B. Cooling Equipment

1. The Superintendent, or designee, in coordination with the local business managers shall request funding for heat mitigation through the budget allocation process.
2. To protect against heat-related illness, seasonally, from June through September, the DOC may provide staff with:
  - a. Containers (e.g., water coolers) that maintain cold temperatures for ice, drinking water, and other beverages;
  - b. Chilled beverages, such as electrolyte sports drinks;
  - c. Cold treats in the break room, such as popsicles, ice cream, or fruit with high water content (e.g., watermelon, grapes, oranges);
  - d. Cooling areas with fans or air conditioning, or shade;
  - e. Cold drinking water;
  - f. Evaporative accessories (e.g., cooling neck wraps, headbands);

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- g. Cooling vests designed to safely use ice packs;
  - h. Light gray, lightweight, moisture-wicking, DOC-branded polo uniform shirts, that are reflective, if possible; and
  - i. Cooling towels.
3. The SOS, or designee, shall:
- a. Identify where to store cooling equipment;
  - b. Ensure the cooling equipment inventory is maintained;
  - c. Inventory the cooling equipment in February and inform the Superintendent, or designee, of any additional or replacement equipment to be considered in the budget allocation request; and
  - d. Ensure staff are aware of the cooling equipment's location.
4. The SOS, or designee, may create a checklist that includes the minimum required cooling equipment for the facility.

### C. Heat Mitigation Process

1. The Superintendent, or designee, shall:
- a. Monitor weather reports daily and be especially vigilant of weather reports when air temperatures rise quickly;
  - b. Reschedule jobs with high heat exposure to cooler times of the day, if possible (e.g., cancel outside work crews, limit the times the yard officer is outside).
  - c. Reschedule, relocate, or cancel recreation in accordance with [Section D., Considerations for Incarcerated Individuals, subsection 1.](#)
  - d. Ensure any operational interruption is documented in the Offender Management System (OMS) as a facility incident. Staff shall:
    - i. Select the boxes for facility, operational interruption, and lockdown; and
    - ii. Include a short narrative explaining the modified lockdown due to the excessive heat conditions.
  - e. Ensure oscillating fans are used in all units;
  - f. Designate cooling rooms for breaks. Clearly communicate the locations of these cooling rooms to staff;
  - g. Allow staff to take more frequent breaks during the first week of the season to acclimatize to higher temperatures, especially those who are new to working in the heat;

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- h. Ensure when operationally possible and necessary for heat mitigation, incarcerated individuals on 15-minute checks are housed on the bottom tier; and
    - i. Schedule more frequent rest periods for staff with water breaks in shaded or air-conditioned recovery areas.
  2. Staff shall immediately report if they notice anyone showing symptoms of a heat-related illness, and follow the appropriate process outlined under the [Responding to Heat-Related Illness Heading](#).
  3. Staff shall report all heat-related incidents involving staff, incarcerated individuals, or others in accordance with the facility incident reporting policy and standard operating procedure (SOP).
  4. If the heat system malfunctions and turns on when the heat index is over 80 degrees, the Superintendent, or designee, shall immediately notify Buildings and General Services (BGS) and complete a facility incident, in accordance with the facility incident reporting policy and SOP.
  5. The DOC encourages staff to:
    - a. Frequently drink small amounts of water to stay hydrated; and
    - b. Eat regular meals and snacks.

### D. Considerations for Incarcerated Individuals

1. The Superintendent, or designee, shall monitor weather reports daily and:
  - a. Reschedule outdoor recreation with high heat exposure to cooler times of the day;
  - b. Relocate outdoor recreation to an inside location; or
  - c. Cancel outdoor recreation.
2. Staff may provide incarcerated individuals with available cooling supplies (e.g., ice, towels).
3. When necessary for heat mitigation, staff supervising incarcerated workers shall provide additional breaks, whenever possible.

## RESPONDING TO HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

### A. Response for Incarcerated Individuals

1. If staff notice or are informed that an incarcerated individual has heat rash, they shall alert the contracted health services staff.

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2. If staff notice or are informed that an incarcerated individual is experiencing heat exhaustion or heat stroke, they shall:
  - a. Immediately call for a 10-33 medical for emergency responders;
  - b. Not leave the incarcerated individual unattended; and
  - c. If possible, initiate necessary emergency actions in accordance with their CPR and First Aid training.

### **B. Response for Staff**

1. If a staff member notices another with a heat rash, or experiences heat rash themselves, they shall immediately notify the CFSS. The CFSS shall permit the staff member to address the heat rash with their personal medical provider.
2. If a staff member notices another experiencing heat exhaustion or heat stroke, they shall:
  - a. Immediately call for a 10-33 medical for emergency responders;
  - b. Not leave the staff member unattended; and
  - c. If possible, initiate necessary emergency actions in accordance with their CPR and First Aid training.
3. The CFSS shall relieve a staff member experiencing heat exhaustion or heat stroke from the rest of their shift.
4. Facility management shall handle any medical accommodation in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement (CBA).