



COOL IT CAMPAIGN

THE RECENT RECORD-BREAKING TEMPERATURES have been a real eye opener for our industry about the importance of planning for what is now predicted to become 'normal' as a result of climate change.

We have been calling for maximum working temperatures of 30°C [27°C for those doing strenuous manual tasks].

Health, Safety and Environment workplace committees should be putting in weather-based plans in good time.

Hot Weather plans should be discussed November/December for the following year and **Winter plans** around July/August.

“What can we do with the weather.... its going to happen... we can't control it....” **Is that something you have heard from management?**

We believe the following or minimum requirements your employer should put in place

- ❑ A **Thermometer** must be provided so that workers can check the temperature in any workplace inside the building. The availability of thermometers is covered by regulation. [We also advise Safety representatives to take temperature checks in relation to accidents or incidents in the workplace.]
- ❑ Workers should be aware that employers have a **duty of care**, and a *legal obligation to protect their health*, ensuring working temperatures are reasonable, comfortable, and safe.
- ❑ **Temperatures exceeding 24°C** present a serious risk of *sunstroke, heat stress and sunburn*. Working in hot weather can also lead to dehydration, tiredness, muscle cramps, rashes, fainting and, in extreme cases, *loss of consciousness*.

Employers must work with union health and safety reps to introduce measures to protect staff – the following describes our *minimum* requirements.

Outdoor work

- ❑ Avoiding outside tasks between **11.00am – 3.00pm** – when the temperature (and *risks*) are highest.
- ❑ Provide **sunscreen** and advice on the need for protection (available in other languages for migrant workers).
- ❑ Allow staff to take plenty of breaks and provide a supply of **drinking water**.
- ❑ Provide *canopies or coverings* over open areas and *shaded areas* for breaks.
- ❑ Provide lightweight **protective clothing**, including *hats*.

Driving

- ❑ Any driver suffering from heat-induced **fatigue** is a risk to *themselves and other people*.
- ❑ Vehicles used for long journeys should be temporarily taken out of use if they cannot sustain a reasonable temperature.

Indoor work

Indoor workplaces can also become dangerously hot. **TUC advice is that nobody should be working indoors where temperatures exceed 30°C.**

At 24°C employers must take action to cool the air, and other measures including:

- ❑ Using **fans** or **other mechanisms** (including adequate ventilation) to cool the air.
- ❑ Relaxing dress codes and uniform policies.
- ❑ Allowing rest breaks and adjusting shifts to avoid travelling in peak heat.
- ❑ Moving workspaces away from windows and other heat sources, using blinds to block out sun.
- ❑ Providing cool drinking water.

Maximum temperatures

Employers must ensure working temperatures are 'reasonable'. The TUC believes employers must act when indoor temperatures exceed **24°C**, with **30°C** *an absolute maximum*.

SPF is PPE

Sunburn and complications from UVA radiation are a risk to health – outdoor workers are *three times more likely* to develop skin cancer than the general working population.

Sunscreen creates a barrier between the worker and the risk and should be considered PPE. Employers should provide sunscreen with an SPF of **at least 30**, free of charge to all outdoor workers.

The RIGHT TO REFUSE

Section 44 of the **Employment Rights Act 1996** provides workers protection from detriment (i.e. dismissal, disciplinary or a pay cut) if they withdraw from and to refuse to return to a workplace that is unsafe. Workers are entitled to remain away from the workplace if – in their opinion – the prevailing circumstances represent a real risk of ‘serious and imminent danger’ which they could not be expected to avert.

The TUC says workers should seek advice from their union before using their rights under Section 44.



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How does our Government compare with others?



US regulations say working temperatures should not go beyond **24°C**



Spain guidelines: working temp must not go beyond **27°C** indoors or **25°C** for physical activity.



In Germany, **26°C** is generally considered the maximum for indoor work.



In China, when temperatures reach **37°C**, outdoor work is banned during the hottest three hours of the day and at **40°C** it must *stop altogether*.



In the UAE, outdoor work is banned entirely between the hours of **12:30** and **15:00**