

## FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 3-3

### ISSUE:        HEAT AND COLD STRESS

#### HEAT STRESS:

Firefighters may suffer serious injury or death due to heat stress, during emergency response and training exercises. Departments should develop training programs that assist firefighters and supervisors in recognizing signs of heat stress. SOPs/OGs should also be produced to assist firefighters in alleviating the causes of heat stress, and should include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Recognition of heat related stress:
  - heat stroke
  - heat exhaustion
  - heat cramps
  - heat rash
  - transient heat fatigue
  - fainting
  
2. Methods to assist in alleviating and managing heat related stress:
  - fluid intake
  - work rotation
  - dressing down from full protective clothing
  - rotating firefighters to areas that may provide cooler temperature by use of air conditioning, or provision of shade
  - have firefighters rest

Firefighters should reschedule non-emergency activities to avoid the risk of heat related stress.

**COLD STRESS:**

Firefighters may also suffer injury from potential adverse effects of over-exposure to cold. These exposures may occur when firefighters are exposed to low temperatures, wind and/or moisture for significant periods of time.

Departments should develop training programs to assist firefighters and supervisors in recognizing the signs of cold related stress. SOPs/OGs should be produced to assist firefighters in alleviating cold-related stress, and should include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of:
  - frostbite
  - hypothermia
  
2. Controls to manage cold stress:
  - work rotation to allow firefighters to rehabilitate where a source of heat is available, protected from wind, rain, snow etc.
  - advise firefighters to wear multiple layers of loose fitting clothing
  - protection of hands, feet, face and head
  - advise firefighters to report to a supervisor, any cold related stress symptoms to themselves or the crew

Firefighters should re-schedule non-emergency activities to avoid cold- related stress.

Further information from the Ministry of Labour can be found in Appendix D