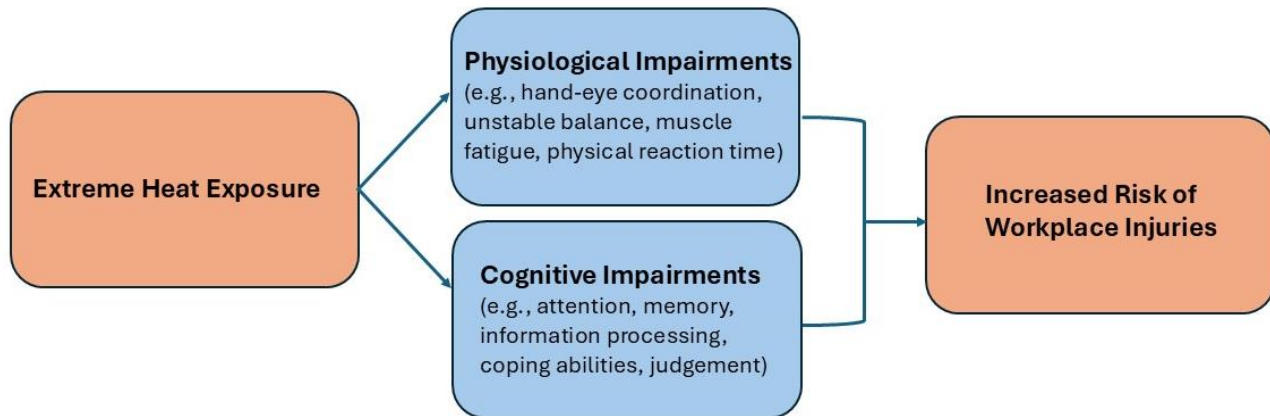


The Connection Between Extreme Heat, Mental Health and Workplace Injuries



2026 Joint Georgia Struck-By and Georgia Mental Health Alliances Stand Down: Score Goals at Work by Cooling Down Your Mind and Body!

Extreme Heat is defined as a period of high heat and humidity where temperatures reach 90 °F or higher for two or more consecutive days¹. Exposure to extreme heat can lead to both physiological and cognitive impairments that **increase the risk of workplace injuries**².



Impact of Extreme Heat on the Body

Physical Health: Exposure to extreme heat can cause a rise in body temperature and lead to symptoms such as confusion, weakness, and other heat-related illnesses¹⁻³, such as:

- **Dehydration** – occurs when the body loses more fluid than it takes in. Caused by insufficient fluid intake and heavy sweating. Symptoms: thirst, dark urine or no urination, dry mouth, headache, fatigue, dizziness, or loss of consciousness.
- **Heat rash** – skin irritation from excessive sweat that gets trapped in the skin due to blocked sweat gland. Results in itchy red bumps or small fluid-filled blisters.
- **Heat cramps** – painful muscle cramps (often in the legs, arms, or abdomen) caused by dehydration and loss of electrolytes.
- **Heat exhaustion** – heavy sweating, muscle cramps, weakness, headache, nausea, dizziness, cool & clammy skin.
- **Heat stroke** – severe condition in which the body can no longer control its temperature. Occurs when the body reaches a core temperature of 104 °F or higher. Symptoms include confusion, slurred speech, loss of consciousness and seizures.
- **Death** – often due to heat stroke or exacerbation of a pre-existing chronic health condition such as respiratory, cardiovascular, or kidney disease.

Mental Health: Extreme heat increases levels of cortisol (stress hormone) and adrenaline in the body, resulting in feelings of agitation, anxiety, and mood instability. This can also lead to stress & burnout,

The Connection Between Extreme Heat, Mental Health and Workplace Injuries



insomnia, feelings of helplessness, and aggravation of pre-existing mental health conditions (e.g. depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, etc.), suicide and suicidal behavior²⁻⁶.

Below are signs that heat is affecting mental health:

- **Behavioral changes** – such as impulsiveness
- **Mood changes** – feeling more depressed, irritable, anxious, stressed or overwhelmed
- **Physical symptoms** – headaches, dizziness, nausea
- **Cognitive issues** – trouble with concentration or memory

Data Talking Points

- An estimated **28,000 workplace injuries** occurred in the U.S. in 2023 that are attributed to physiological and cognitive impairments from heat exposure².
- Workers in Construction, Transportation and Warehousing, Manufacturing, Agriculture, and Waste Management and Remediation industries have **increased odds of workplace injuries** related to heat exposure².
- Workplace injuries in the U.S. begin rising around a **heat index of 85 °F²**.
- The odds of **workplace injuries increase** linearly as temperatures become more extreme (90 °F and higher)².
- A **1°F increase** in the average daily temperature **increases the risk of work-related heat-illness emergency department visits** by about 14% among states in the Southeastern U.S. The risk increases to 54% during extreme heat days¹.
- The highest number of **reported non-fatal heat-related injuries** in the U.S. during 2021-2022 occurred among workers in the following industries⁷:
 - Manufacturing (n=980)
 - Transportation and Warehousing (n=950)
 - Professional Business Services (n=740)
 - Administration and Support and Waste Management (n=720)
 - Construction (n=620)
 - Information (n=340)
- From 2011-2012 to 2021-2022, the number of reported non-fatal heat-related injuries among U.S. construction workers decreased from about 1,500 to 620 (**a 57.2% decrease**)⁷.
- From 2011-2012 to 2021-2022, the rate of non-fatal heat-related injuries among U.S. construction workers decreased from 1.2 to 0.4 per 10,000 full-time equivalent workers (FTEs), however it still **remained higher than the rate among all industries** (0.3 to 0.2 per 10,000 FTEs)⁷.
- States with the highest **average annual number of severe heat-related injuries** in Construction during 2015 – 2023 were: Texas (n = 15) , Florida (n= 12), Arkansas (n=3), and Georgia (n=3)⁸.

The Connection Between Extreme Heat, Mental Health and Workplace Injuries



- The highest number of severe heat-related injuries occur during the months of **June, July, and August**⁸.
- Construction workers account for over one-third (**34%**) of all occupational heat-related deaths in 2023⁷.
- A less than **2 °F increase** in average daily temperature is associated with **1.7% higher** incidence of **suicide**⁶.
- Construction workers have **significantly higher rates** of workplace injuries, fatalities, suicide, and overdose deaths than U.S. workers overall⁹.
- During 2023, there were **982** fatal workplace injuries among U.S. construction workers – **5,095** suicides and **15,910** overdose deaths⁹.

Managing Physical & Mental Health during Extreme Heat Days^{3-5,9}

- **Drink water:** Dehydration can worsen stress, anxiety, and irritability.
- **Make healthy choices:** Eat balanced nutritious meals and get exercise.
- **Manage stress:** Use techniques to reduce stress, such as meditation or breathing exercises, therapy or counseling.
- **Get sleep:** Lack of adequate sleep throws hormones off balance and increases levels of cortisol (stress hormone).
- **Stay cool:** Wear loose, lightweight, breathable clothing, use fans or air conditioners. Take shaded breaks throughout the day. Spend time inside or in the shade during the hottest part of the day.
- Integrate mental health into workplace **Heat-illness Prevention Plans**.
 - Acknowledge the effects of heat on mental health.
 - Include targeted strategies for intervention and psychosocial support.
- **Consult with a healthcare provider or mental health professional** if you continue to experience symptoms during hot temperatures.
- **Call 911 immediately** for heat-related illness emergencies, such as heat stroke.
- **Call or text the 988 Lifeline** to speak with a caring counselor if you are facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, or just need someone to talk to. All calls are free and confidential and available anytime, day or night.

Additional Resources

- **Visit:** <https://heat.gov/who-is-most-at-risk-to-extreme-heat/> for more information and resources on staying safe in the heat.
- **Visit:** <https://oshainfo.gatech.edu/written-program-templates/> for a Heat Stress Prevention Program template.

The Connection Between Extreme Heat, Mental Health and Workplace Injuries



References:

1. Shire, J., Vaidyanathan, A., Lackovic, M., & Bunn, T. (2020). Association between work-related hyperthermia emergency department visits and ambient heat in five southeastern states, 2010 – 2012 – A case-crossover study. *GeoHealth*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2019GH000241>
2. Alahamad, B., Kessler, W., Alwadi, Y., Schwartz, J., Wagner, G.R., & Michaels, D. (2025). A nationwide analysis of heat and workplace injuries in the United States. *Environmental Health*, 24:65. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12940-025-01231-1>
3. Rony, M.K.K. & Alamgir, H.M. (2023). High temperatures on mental health: Recognizing the association and the need for proactive strategies – A perspective. *Health Science Reports*, 6 (12): e1729. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hsr2.1729>
4. Teklemariam, D. (2025, August 4). *The overlooked link between heat and mental health*. <https://blogs.imperial.ac.uk/ighi/2025/08/04/link-between-heat-and-mental-health/>
5. UCLA Health. (2023, September 26). *4 effects of heat on mental health (and how to protect yourself)*. <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/4-effects-heat-mental-health-and-how-protect-yourself-2>
6. Thompson, R., Lawrance, E.L., Roberts, L.F., Graily, K., Ashraffian, H., Maheswaran, H., Toledano, M.B., & Darzi, A. (2023). Ambient temperature and mental health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet Planet Health*, 7(7): e580-e589. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(23\)00104-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(23)00104-3)
7. Harris, W., Trueblood, A., Dufoe, D., Brooks, R., West, G., & Roelofs, C. (2025, August). Heat injuries and illnesses among construction workers. *CPWR Data Bulletin*. <https://www.cpwr.com/wp-content/uploads/DataBulletin-August2025.pdf>
8. CPWR (2025, August 4). *Heat illnesses and injuries*. The Center for Construction Research and Training. <https://www.cpwr.com/research/data-center/the-construction-chart-book/interactive-7th/injuries-illnesses-health/heat-illnesses/>
9. CPWR. (n.d.). *Mental health in the construction industry*. <https://www.cpwr.com/research/research-to-practice-r2p/r2p-library/other-resources-for-stakeholders/mental-health-addiction/>