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TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS OF ILLINOIS RISK MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

# RISK REMINDER

## Hydration

Every year there are people in need of medical treatment due to dehydration.

It is important to recognize the basic signs of dehydration and take proactive measures to combat the negative side effects. Irritability, headache, weakness, dizziness, chills, heartburn, and nausea are the principle signs of dehydration. **Thirst is typically a poor indicator of hydration because it is a delayed response.** In fact, an active person can lose more than 1.5 liters of body water before ever experiencing thirst.

Dehydration of 1 to 2 percent of body weight begins to compromise physiologic function and negatively influences performance. As dehydration continues, a person is at increased risk of developing heat cramps or heat exhaustion.

To ensure proper hydration, all employees should have fluids constantly available. Either purchase water bottles or allow the employees to bring their own for every shift they work. This will aid in keeping your employees at peak performance, but it also alleviates the need to leave the jobsite to get a drink.

Standard recommendations for athletes consist of drinking up to 20 ounces of water or sports drink two to three hours before duty, and another 8 to 10 ounces 20 minutes before. While employees may not burn as many calories as a traditional athlete, the need to perform at a high level over a long period of time requires similar caution.

Encourage your employees to hydrate during each of their breaks. In order to maintain optimum performance, the employee needs to replace all of the fluids they lose while on duty. On particularly hot or humid days, it becomes even more important to monitor hydration.

Sports drinks do not hydrate better than water, but people are more likely to drink larger volumes, which leads to better hydration. The typical sweet-tart taste combination doesn't quench thirst, so you will keep drinking a sports drink long after water has lost its appeal. An attractive array of colors and flavors are available. You can get a carbohydrate boost from sports drinks, in addition to electrolytes which may be lost from perspiration.

In addition to providing your employees with fluids, it is also important to encourage them to maintain a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle.



**For more information, contact your Loss Control Consultant at (800) 252-5059, ext. 1387 or 1384.**

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