

Training Guide: Heat Safety, Rights and Worker Power

A 2-Hour Training for Workers



A 2-hour training for indoor and outdoor workers that builds worker knowledge, strengthens prevention, and fuels collective action for safer, more just workplaces.

Training Goals:

By the end of this training, workers will:

- Identify heat hazards in indoor and outdoor workplaces
- Understand how heat harms the body and recognize symptoms
- Know how to control heat hazards and prevent illness
- Understand basic rights under OSHA, regardless of immigration status
- Practice collective strategies to address heat hazards
- Leave with clear next steps and connections to the training group

2-Hour Agenda at a Glance:

TIME	SECTION
0-15 min	Welcome, Agreements & Grounding
15-30 min	Heat in Our Work & Lives
30-50 min	How Heat Harms the Body
50-75 min	Identifying Heat Hazards
75-95 min	Controlling Heat Hazards
95-115 min	Rights Under OSHA & Collective Action
115-120 min	Commitments and Closing



Materials Needed:

Basic Set Up	Optional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flipchart paper ● Markers ● Tape (to post charts on walls) ● Sign-in sheet ● Name tags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Printed Discussion Questions ● Slides, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Heat illness progression (early → serious → emergency) ○ Key protections (water, rest, shade, etc.) ○ OSHA rights (plain language)

FACILITATOR GUIDE

===== 0-15 min | Welcome, Agreements & Grounding =====

Purpose: Set the tone, build trust, and center worker experience in this training.

Activity Type: Go-around and group norms

1. Welcome Participants

- Introduce yourself and your local COSH group, worker center, or union
- Name your mission [COSH’s mission: worker safety, health, and collective power]

2. Opening Question (go-around or popcorn)

- Ask: “Please share your name and where you work. What is one word that describes working in the heat?”

3. Build Community Agreements:

- Ask: “What agreements do we need to make this a good space?” Some agreements may include:
 - Respect lived experience
 - Step up / step back
 - Confidentiality
 - We look out for each other

4. Key message to close the section: “Workers are the experts in their workplaces. This training is built on your knowledge.”

Facilitator Tips:

- Model warmth and energy from the start.
- If people are quiet, invite pair shares first.
- Learn names early and use them often.

===== 15-30 min | Heat in Our Work and Lives =====

Purpose: Identify shared experience and build collective analysis of how heat shows up in our jobs and daily lives.

Activity Type: Small-group story sharing

1. Open the conversation and say:

- “Before we talk about heat illness, let’s start with what we already know from work and life.”

2. In groups of 3–4, discuss:

- When have you or a coworker felt sick from heat?
- Where did it happen, indoors or outdoors?
- What made it worse?
- How did the workplace respond?

3. Bring the group back together. Invite each group to share out.

- Ask: “Can each group share one story or a pattern you noticed?” Encourage specificity: what happened, what conditions, what was the response.

As groups report:

- Write key words/phrases on a flipchart or screen

- Group similar responses together (for example: lack of water, pressure to keep working, no shade, indoor heat, ignored complaints)
- Follow up and ask: “How many people have experienced something similar?”

4. Key Message to close the section: “Heat illness is not an accident. It’s a workplace hazard.”

- You can reinforce with: “Many heat problems come from working conditions, not just weather.”

===== **30-50 min | How Heat Harms the Body** =====

Purpose: Build understanding of how heat affects the body.

Activity Type: Interactive Dialogue

1. Start with participant experience:

Ask: “Think about a very hot day at work. How did your body feel?”

- Pause. Invite 2–3 people to share.
- Then ask: “What happens when the body gets too hot?”

As participants respond:

- Write their answers on a flipchart or shared screen.
- Affirm responses and connect them to the bigger picture.

2. Build on their knowledge and say: “What I’m hearing is that the body is working hard to cool itself. It needs to stay at a safe temperature to survive.”

Add clearly:

- The body cools itself through sweating and blood flow
- When heat builds faster than the body can cool itself, it becomes dangerous

3. Make it interactive and ask: “What makes heat worse at your job?”

- As people call things out, group and name them:
 - Heavy work / fast pace
 - Poor ventilation or hot indoor spaces
 - High humidity
 - Wearing PPE
 - Not enough breaks or water

Pause and reflect: “A lot of this is about working conditions, not just the weather.”

4. Build symptoms as a progression and say:

“Our bodies usually give us warning signs. What are early signs that someone is getting too hot?”

- **Write responses, then organize visually:**
 - Early signs: headache, heavy sweating, cramps, fatigue
 - Serious signs: dizziness, nausea, confusion, vomiting
 - Emergency / Heat Stroke: fainting, seizures, confusion, hot dry skin or no sweating
- **Emphasize:** “Heat stroke is life-threatening. This is when the body can no longer cool itself.”

5. What to Do (Call-and-Response):

- Ask: “If a coworker is showing serious signs, what do we do?”
- Use call-and-response to build energy and memory:
 - Facilitator: “Stop work!” → Group repeats

- Facilitator: “Cool the body!” → Group repeats
- Facilitator: “Call 911!” → Group repeats
- Facilitator: “Stay with the worker!” → Group repeats
- You can repeat twice, a little louder the second time.

6. Key message to close the section: “These steps can save a life. No job is worth risking this.”

===== **50-75 min | Identifying Heat Hazards** =====

Purpose: Connect heat illness to workplace conditions and make hazards visible.

Activity Type: Hazard Mapping

1. Set the tone and say:

- “We’ve talked about how heat affects the body. Now let’s name what’s causing it at work.”
- “These hazards are not random. They’re part of working conditions.”

2. Activity: Hazard Mapping (Whole Group)

- Ask: “What are the heat hazards in your workplace?”
- Write responses on a flipchart or screen in real time

As people share, write responses into categories:

Outdoor Hazards:

- Direct sun
- Asphalt or concrete heat
- No shade
- Piece rate or pressure to keep working

Indoor Hazards:

- Poor ventilation
- Hot machinery
- Crowded spaces
- No AC
- PPE that traps heat

Facilitator tips:

- Prompt if needed: “What about inside? What about the pace of work?”
- Connect dots: “Notice how many of these are about working conditions, not just temperature.”

3. Key message to close the section: “If we can name the hazard, we can organize to change it.”

===== **75-95 min | Controlling Heat Hazards** =====

Purpose: Shift from identifying problems to naming solutions and employer responsibility.

Activity Type: Whole Group Brainstorm

1. Transition:

- “If these are the hazards, what should be done to prevent heat illness?”

Ask:

- “What should employers control to keep workers safe?”

As participants share:

- Build a visible list

- Use their language, then add missing pieces

Guide toward key protections:

- Water (free, cool, accessible)
- Rest breaks that increase in frequency as temperatures rise
- Shade, cooling areas, and/or cool air
- Adjusted workloads or pace
- Training
- Emergency plans
- Acclimatization
- Protection from retaliation

2. The facilitator says: "The most effective protection is fixing the workplace, not expecting workers to push through."

Reinforce: "This is not about individual strength. It is about safe conditions."

- Pause for a moment. You can ask:
 - "What are examples of workplaces doing this right?"
 - "What would need to change at your job to make this real?"
- Affirm responses and connect back to earlier solutions named by the group.

3. Key message to close the section: "Heat protection is an employer responsibility."

===== **95-115 min | Rights Under OSHA & Collective Action** =====

Purpose: Connect rights to power, and individual risk to collective action.

Activity Type: Interactive Dialogue

1. Start with rights and ask: "What rights do workers have when it comes to heat?" (take a few responses)

Then add clearly:

- Workers have the right to raise concerns about dangerous heat and ask for safer conditions.
- Workers have the right to speak up together as a group about health and safety.
- Workers have the right to information and training about workplace hazards.
- OSHA says employers must provide a workplace free from recognized serious hazards.
- Heat is a recognized workplace hazard that can cause illness, injury, or death.
- Even though there is **not yet a national heat standard**, employers still have legal obligations to take reasonable steps to protect workers from dangerous heat.
- These rights apply regardless of immigration status. In today's climate, immigrant workers may also want to take extra precautions and organize collectively when raising concerns.

Say clearly: "Employers are responsible for providing a safe workplace. There is no federal heat standard yet, which can make enforcement harder, but employers are not off the hook. OSHA can still use existing law, including the General Duty Clause, when dangerous heat is likely to cause serious physical harm."

2. Address Fear & Retaliation (Interactive):

- Ask: "What fears stop people from speaking up?"
- Write responses (e.g., losing job, retaliation, immigration concerns)

Name it:

- “Retaliation happens, and it’s illegal.”
- “That’s why we don’t act alone.”

3. Collective Action (shift to power):

- Ask: “How can workers protect each other?”

Add and reinforce:

- Speaking up as a group
- Buddy systems
- Documenting hazards together
- Worker committees
- Partnering with COSH groups, worker centers, and unions
- Using public pressure when needed
- Immigrant workers can reduce risk by acting collectively, avoiding isolation, documenting concerns with trusted coworkers, and connecting with worker centers or community groups before raising issues alone
- Support coworkers who may face language barriers, retaliation threats, or immigration-related fear by sharing information, translating, and standing together

4. Key message to close the section: “When workers act together, risk goes down and power goes up.”

===== **115-120 min | Commitments & Closing** =====

Purpose: Move from learning to action and end with collective energy.

Activity Type: Quick Go-around + Closing

1. One Commitment (Popcorn style):

- Ask: “One thing I will do to protect myself or my coworkers from heat is...”
- Invite quick responses (1–2 words or short phrases)

2. Share Resources:

- Point to available tools:
 - Trainings
 - Materials
 - Local COSH contact
 - Upcoming opportunities to get involved

3. Close with: “We protect ourselves best when we protect each other.”