**Napo’s view on “Temperature in the workplace” and the threat of a red temperature warning next week (week commencing 18th July 2022):**

*We have received an enquiry via National Office that stated:*

Monday and Tuesdays weather warning pushes into focus how many offices lack air conditioning that actually works. It also brings us to office conditions, in Spain and Germany I think there is an upper limit of 27C in office spaces, are PS taking it seriously.

* Is PS measuring heat and humidity in offices?
* Is there any guidance on what heat and humidity to call an office unworkable?

Given there is talk of risk to life and infrastructure I’ve seen very little by way of workable guidance other than to wear sun cream and stay in the shade.

*Response:*

Employers have a duty of care to their employees.

The law does not state a minimum or maximum temperature, but the temperature in workrooms should normally be at least **16°C** or **13°C** if much of the work involves rigorous physical effort

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 lay down particular requirements for most aspects of the working environment. Regulation 7 deals specifically with the temperature in indoor workplaces and states that: 'During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable.'

As a Trade Union we have a responsibility to our members to provide reliable guidance, accurate information and support.

Exceptional heat is expected to affect a large part of England early next week, with temperatures likely in the high 30s C in some places and perhaps even reaching 40°C.

The Health and Safety Executive website provides information on workplace temperatures via the following link:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/index.htm?utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=temperature-2022&utm_term=temp-headline&utm_content=digest-14-jul-22>

The Met Office have issued a Level 4 red alert for hot weather, placing the UK on a National emergency footing which is explained in the following link.

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/press-office/news/weather-and-climate/2022/red-extreme-heat-warning>

The UK Health Security Agency have offered guidance via a Heat Health Warning which is explained in the following link.

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/heat-health/?tab=heatHealth&season=normal>

We should share these links widely and encourage people to follow the situation closely. The projections are for a National Emergency and the map, that breaks down the threat by region is viewable at:

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/lib/images/graphics/HHWCWA-map.png>

which also states:

**Current watch level: Level 4 - Emergency**

Issued at: 10:29 on Fri 15 Jul 2022

**There is a 100 % probability of Heat-Health Alert criteria being met between 0000 on Monday and 0000 on Wednesday in parts of England.**

Renewed hot or very hot conditions develop across the country during this coming weekend and into the new working week, peaking on Monday and Tuesday, with some exceptional temperatures possible in places. The hottest locations are likely to be in parts of central and eastern England. This alert will be kept under daily review and updated as necessary.

An update will be issued when the alert level changes in any region. Alerts are issued once a day by 0900 if required and are not subject to amendment in between standard issue times. Note that the details of the forecast weather are valid at the time of issue but may change over the period that an alert remains in force. These details will not be updated here unless the alert level also changes, the latest forecast details can be obtained at the following link: http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast/#?tab=map

**Advice:** Look out for others, especially older people, young children and babies and those with underlying health conditions. Close curtains on rooms that face the sun to keep indoor spaces cooler and remember it may be cooler outdoors than indoors. Drink plenty of fluids and avoid excess alcohol, dress appropriately for the weather and slow down when it is hot. Be on the lookout for signs of heat related illness. Cool your skin with water, slow down and drink water. Call [NHS 111](tel:111) or in an emergency [dial 999](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/heat-health/999).

Advice on how to reduce the risk can be obtained from the [Heatwave Plan for England](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england) page, from your doctor or local chemist, or ring [NHS 111](tel:111).

The Governments Heatwave Plan for England provides helpful guidance via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england>

The Unions Advice is that you should:

1. As previously advised, risk assess your current workload, workplace and travel arrangements.
2. avoid exposure to the sun at its peak temperature, i.e. between noon and 6pm.
3. Undertake a thermal comfort risk assessment of your workplace, which might currently include your home
4. Be mindful of the impact of the extreme temperatures might have on vulnerable colleagues and people service users including the pregnant, menopausal women, those with long covid, limited access, others regarded as clinically or clinically extremely vulnerable.
5. raise any concerns you might have with your union health and safety rep, line manager and in their absence PDU Head.
6. take the necessary steps to safeguard yourself, colleagues and service users from excessive heat.
7. Drink lots of fluids, being mindful that caffeine and alcohol can accelerate dehydration.
8. Take advantage of air conditioning and ventilation.
9. Dress appropriately.
10. Cover bare skin and use sunscreen.
11. Pace your work appropriately.

Attached is a copy of the HSE’s Heat Stress checklist.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/assets/docs/heat-stress-checklist.pdf>

Guidance on carrying out a Thermal Comfort risk assessment can be found at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/thermal/measuring.htm>

Ian Richards

15th July 2022.

Previous guidance (dated 9th July 2010) for information:

**Hot Weather Advice (Thermal Comfort)**

Dear Colleagues,   
**Thermal Comfort – Hot weather Advice**  
As the summer starts and the hot weather appears to be upon us, Napo are re-issuing some brief guidance to H & S representatives about the hot working conditions.   
  
As you will be aware, there is no statutory maximum working temperature, only a requirement upon the employer to ensure working temperatures are "reasonable".  It is considered that when the temperature reaches 24oC in the workplace, a review of the risk assessment for the workplace should be undertaken.  Remember, a thermometer will be needed in the office to be able to tell the temperature!  Fans and increased ventilation may be required. Air cooling systems may be necessary where premises cannot be adapted or modified in any other way to provide adequate conditions. Where, despite the provision of local cooling staff are exposed to temperatures which do not give reasonable comfort there should be systems of work in place to ensure that the length of time staff work in these areas is limited. Cool drinks should be provided and regular breaks should be encouraged.   
  
Attached to this advice is the 2009 information to Probation Areas as published on EPIC.  This gives some guidelines to Trusts about the management of "thermal discomfort".  Please note that this has guidelines for general offices, but also Unpaid Work, group work and Approved Premises.   
  
Also of use is the Health and Safety Executive's information on this issue, available at - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/>   
  
For any further guidance or information, please contact Mike McClelland (National Official) or Mike Quinn (National Vice-Chair) at Chivalry Road.   
  
**Mike Quinn   
National Vice-Chair & National Officer Link to Health & Safety Committee**

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**EPIC: H&S Guidance Note “Managing the Effects of Hot Weather Conditions”**

**Issue No. I – Date Jan 09**

**Background**

During hot weather conditions, it is likely that staff, service users and visitors in Probation premises and work sites may experience some degree of thermal discomfort generating complaints of tiredness, lack of concentration, headaches and other minor ill health effects. However the likelihood of staff experiencing more significant symptoms (such as body failure to control internal temperature, deep body temperature rise, heart rate increase, heat stroke and dehydration) is remote.

Health and safety legislation states that during working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable; (Ref.1) However the legislation does not specify a maximum temperature for workplaces, but rather requires employers to take reasonable steps to minimise the effects of thermal discomfort.

The view of the Health and Safety Executive is that setting a maximum working temperature limit remains inappropriate as thermal comfort depends on many others factors such as humidity, air movement, air temperature, radiant temperature and solar gain. Their advice is that employers should take thermal comfort into account in their workplace risk assessments; (Ref 2)

**Aims**

This guidance is issued in conjunction with the National Policy Arrangement; Management of Safety in the NPS Estate (NPS/HS/13)and accompanyingguide on office workspace and the working environment in Probation premises; (Ref 3)

The intention of this guidance is to assist managers to determine the reasonable steps necessary to reduce to the risk of thermal discomfort. These should be determined by assessing the risk at the relevant premise or site and should be undertaken where necessary in consultation with staff and their Health and Safety Representatives.

The National Policy guidance suggests that a specific risk assessment will be required if the temperature is identified as a problem. For example when unusually low, below 16ºC; (Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations) or unusually high, above 24ºC; (World Health Organisation guidance; (Ref 4)

The risk assessment should be reviewed If the thermal environment is shown to be a significant hazard or existing precautions are insufficient, then action should be taken to remove the hazard or reduce the risks. (HSE Thermal Comfort in the Workplace ;(Ref 2)

**Note the temperature of 24ºC is recommended as a trigger point for managers to review the situation by means of a risk assessment; it should not be simply taken as an upper limit for ceasing work.**

**Possible risk reduction measures**

The following are possible risk reduction measures that could be introduced to reduce the effects of thermal discomfort. General guidance for offices is detailed below together with additional considerations for the special circumstances applicable in Approved Premises, Group Work and Unpaid Work.

## General offices

* Shade windows with reflective film or suitable blinds to reduce radiant heat
* Skylight windows and glass roofs could be fitted with reflective film, suitable blinds or at least whitewashed
* Provide sufficient fans, desk towers etc to facilitate local cooling, increase air movement and evaporation
* Ensure all windows are in good condition and can be opened easily and safely[[1]](#endnote-1)
* Ensure hot water pipe and other similar plant are insulated to reduce heat radiation in to a room
* Ensure radiators, electrical heaters etc are switched off
* Review electrical equipment in the office and whether any can be switched off to reduce heat generation
* Identify any particular problem room(s) that becomes exceptionally hot compared to rest of building and if possible vacate and relocate occupants to cooler rooms.
* Encourage employees to wear appropriate clothes (e.g. loose, light clothing)
* Ensure an adequate supply of cooled drinking water
* Encourage employees to drink water frequently even if the employee is not thirsty (avoiding tea, coffee and alcohol as these have a dehydrating effect)
* If some rooms are already fitted with air conditioning, consideration should be given to re-using one as a “refuge” for staff to take breaks in
* Rotate tasks among staff (eg if the reception area is excessively hot, arrange cover so that during the day 8 staff would only have to spend 1 hour at the desk rather than 1 staff for 8 hours)
* Re-organise duties or perform duties in a different environment, (e.g. tasks that require more physical effort should be done in the cooler part of the day or in cooler areas)
* Increase frequency and duration of breaks
* Vary hours worked (e.g. arrive early/leave early)

In extreme hot weather conditions or in some offices these measures may not be enough to adequately control thermal discomfort and the ability to work. It is impossible to define such extreme conditions purely by air temperature as

there are many other factors involved (as discussed above) and there will also be substantial variation from office to office or even room to room a temporary reduction of working hours, cessation of work or relocation to another room/office Should be considered. Such a decision will need to be taken in conjunction with Senior Management in accordance with the Business Continuity plan.

**Approved Premises**

In Approved Premises the following should be considered in addition to the general measures above:-

* Fitting of reflective film to bedroom and communal windows particularly those receiving direct sunlight in the afternoon
* Provision of fans in bedrooms (preferably wall mounted)
* Encourage residents to drink water frequently.
* Advise residents to keep bedroom curtains or blinds closed during the day
* Consider providing a portable air conditioning unit in a communal room as a “refuge” for residents

Under no circumstances should window restrictors be removed or disabled to increase window openings. Particular attention will also be need to be given to the ensure residents do not damage or remove restrictors in order to increase ventilation in rooms.

Group rooms

For group rooms the following should be considered in addition to the general measures above:-

* Consider flexible running of group times e.g. reducing length of sessions, increasing numbers of breaks
* Consider option to reschedule groups to cooler times of the day i.e. early morning, late afternoon or evening
* Provide group members with ready access to drinking water
* Identify any particular problem group rooms that becomes exceptionally hot and consider running groups at alternative locations

**Unpaid Work**

In Unpaid Work workshops and projects the physical nature of work increases thermal discomfort and the risk of thermal stress. In addition outdoor work exposes staff and offenders to additional risks during hot weather such as sun burn or other skin disorders. The following are additional measures that should be considered:-

* Schedule heavy work or work in direct sunlight to cooler periods of the day or other days
* Introduce additional rest breaks
* Reduce the hours of the working day
* Alternate offenders between duties where some work is in a cooler place
* Provide a cool area for workers to retire to for rest breaks
* Provide drinking water and encourage people to drink small amounts often
* Consider the provision of a canopy over work areas where possible
* Ensure workers and staff wear suitable clothing (e.g. lightweight opaque clothing (trousers and long sleeves, preferably natural fibres) and discourage workers from taking shirts off.
* Encourage the wearing of a suitable hat
* Rotate offenders on duties where personal protective equipment is required
* Formally advise staff and offenders about the risks of sun exposure and encourage the regular application of sunscreens with maximum Sun Protection Factor protection
* Encourage the wearing of sunglasses, where this does not impact on the health and safety of the work or prevent any personal protective equipment specified for the task being worn

**References**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ref No** | **Issue** | **Referenced Source** |
| 1 | Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 | Approved Code of Practice and Guidance  L24 |
| 2 | Thermal comfort in the workplace | HSE: HSG194 |
| 3 | NPS Guidance on office workspace and the working environment in probation premises | EPIC  Support Service / Human Resources / Health & Safety |
| 4 | World Health Organisation | Euro 04/03 Fact Sheet |

1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)