



In September of 2021, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced measures it was initiating to protect workers exposed to hot environments and reduce the dangers of exposure to ambient heat in the workplace. This included the development of a National Emphasis Program on heat inspections, enforcement initiatives on heat hazards and the launch of a rulemaking process to develop a federal workplace heat standard. At the same time, the agency announced the formation of a National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (NACOSH) Heat Injury and Illness Work Group. OSHA also solicited public comment during the Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM). To support OSHA's information gathering effort and as an opportunity to represent NECA member interests, NECA Safety developed a Heat Injury and Illness Prevention Survey. The survey results provided invaluable detail and context related to programs and strategies currently in use at NECA contractor workplaces.

Respondents to the survey represented companies of all sizes, with employee counts ranging from (18) to (3200) and perform a wide variety of work but are mostly in the construction sector. Those participating in the survey reported that their companies have Heat Injury and Illness Prevention programs already in place, with key elements being training, hazard assessments, supervision, water/rest/shade, and adjusted work schedules. Most respondents indicated that their companies have processes for acclimatizing workers to heat and methods for monitoring employee condition. Some respondents report the use of advanced engineering controls such as cooling vests, misting stations, and large capacity fans. Companies that have experienced heat related injuries and fatalities in the last five years report that the majority have occurred in outdoor settings and were related to environmental heat. Most reported injuries and fatalities occurred in the Southwestern and Midwestern portions of the country and had weather listed as the major contributing factor. When asked about what classification of worker was most affected, most respondents listed journeyman with apprentices having the second highest occurrences of injury.

The OSHA Heat Injury and Illness rulemaking process continues and NECA will remain engaged in all relevant discussions and work groups to ensure proposed rules do not become overly burdensome or infeasible for electrical contractors. Considering the wide array of environments and conditions NECA contractors perform work, it's important that the regulations are implementable, enforceable and offer the best protection for workers while ensuring employers maintain the ability to tailor their Safety and Health Programs, meeting the specific demands of their business.