



CWU Report.

All Unions need to react to the fact that climate change is increasing the severity and prevalence of known occupational hazards, as well as the development of new hazards. Most at risk are our outdoor workers, although workers in hot indoor environments are also at risk. We have all recently observed climate related increases in our exposure to elevated temperatures, more frequent, severe or longer-lasting extreme events, degraded air quality, and stresses to our mental health and well-being.

All of these 'work related climate change risks' are expected to worsen with continued climate change. Some of these weather-related threats will occur over longer time periods, or at unprecedented times of the year. Some workers will be exposed to weather hazards not previously experienced.

All TUSDAC stakeholders could/should look integrate trade union best practice into their professional risk assessment processes, the already visible impacts of climate change, as well as considering the future impacts that can be anticipated demonstrates that we need to raise the urgency to deploy newer more effective risk control measures.

We must provide information and training on campaigns. Current systems should be overhauled and 'fit for purpose'. Safe Systems of work must be introduced for the expected changes in extreme seasonal weather from harsh winters to extreme summers.

1. Wet-bulb Global temperature: What is it, how to use it and how is it directly linked to human risk factors in extreme heat? and why is it potentially important to Trade Unions?

This system is far more useful at predicting heat related risks for outdoor workers than ordinary dry bulb thermometers. Wet Bulb Global Temperature system is the HIDDEN HEAT METRIC that trade unions need to know about. Industry and Military worldwide, including NATO, use WBGT to protect from high core body temperature and internal heat damage to vital organs. Heat Stress prevention demands accurate measurement and analysis of heat stress in the outdoor workplace.

Wet-bulb temperature is useful for understanding how hot weather affects the body because a similar evaporative process occurs when people sweat. How hot you feel at a given temperature can vary depending on whether you're in a humid or dry environment. The potential for heat-related illnesses due to changing climate is a growing concern, if not properly managed, can lead to severe health issues such as heat stroke, dehydration and even fatalities. By providing a realistic measure of heat stress, WBGT enables employers to implement effective, inexpensive heat safety protocols, ensuring the well-being of their workforce while maintaining operational efficiency.

TUSDAC Climate Risks – Outdoor workers Severe Weather working group

[Extech HT30 Heat Stress WBGT \(Wet Bulb Globe Temperature\) Meter](#) is a typical example WBGT thermometer but useful WBGT information is readily available For example; today's **low risk** WBGT reading in North Liverpool is below using [Meteologix.com](#)

Wet bulb temperature

Time	Reading
07/31/2025, 07:00am	16.3°C
07/31/2025, 05:00am	15.3°C
07/31/2025, 04:00am	15.5°C

Accurate WBGT Thresholds for work activity modifications are needed. Understanding WBGT thresholds helps tailor activities to mitigate heat stress risks. Below is an example WBGT risk matrix for outdoor physical work activity or manually intensive outdoor work roles

Caution	WBGT above 80°F (27°C)	Regular work activities can proceed but with increased vigilance for signs of heat stress. Regular hydration and scheduled breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas are recommended.
Extreme Caution	WBGT above 85°F (29.5°C)	Enhance preventive measures, particularly for strenuous or high-risk work activities. Increase the frequency and duration of breaks and consider rescheduling intense tasks to cooler parts of the day.
Danger	WBGT above 88°F (31°C)	Significantly curtail physical work activities, especially during peak heat hours. hydration options are readily available.
Extreme Danger	WBGT above 90°F (32°C)	Suspend most outdoor activities, especially those involving physical exertion and lone working. Continuous monitoring for heat-related illnesses is essential, with immediate medical intervention available if needed.

2. What other trade union risk issues linked to Climate change need to be addressed?

Trade unions campaign to minimise outdoor worker risks due to climate change by insisting ALL Uniform for outdoor workers be treated as PPE and manufactured to standard EN 13758

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The European standard 13758 specifies the labelling requirements for clothing intended to protect the wearer against exposure to ultraviolet solar radiation. The standard specifies how the protection factor of clothing is measured and what must be stated on the label so that wearers can easily orientate themselves.

Clothing is an obvious source of protection against UVR exposure, but its effectiveness is not often fully quantified. The EN13758 standard is divided into two parts:

- EN 13758-1 describes the method for measuring the UV protection factor (UPF), i.e. how well the material blocks UV rays.
- EN 13758-2 specifies how clothing that offers this protection should be labelled so that consumers can quickly identify which products really provide protection.



Contrary to popular opinion, some 'summer fabrics' provide insufficient ultraviolet (UV) protection for outdoor workers.

3. Raising awareness of particularly vulnerable workers in hot weather.

Potential to explore a new outdoor workers TUC approved risk matrix by working with leading academics such as Professor Andy Morse

[Professor Andy Morse | Our people | University of Liverpool](#)

Fully fit staff with no recognised relevant disabilities	Vulnerability risk 1
Staff with cardiopulmonary diagnosis	Vulnerability risk 5
Staff with Muscular skeletal diagnosis	Vulnerability risk 3
Staff with other relevant diagnosis	Vulnerability risk 2
Staff on SSRI medication	Vulnerability risk 3
Staff with Kidney/liver or urinary diagnosis	Vulnerability risk 5
Staff with T1 or T2 Diabetes	Vulnerability risk 4
Staff who are pregnant in trimester 1 or 2	Vulnerability risk 5
Staff with Bowel or intestine diagnosis	Vulnerability risk 4

EXAMPLE risk matrix for outdoor workers

	SAFE OUTDOOR HOURS	SAFE OUTDOOR HOURS	SAFE OUTDOOR HOURS	SAFE OUTDOOR HOURS
Vulnerability risk 1	5	4.5	4	Suspend activity
Vulnerability risk 2	4	3.5	3	Suspend activity
Vulnerability risk 3	3	2.5	2	Suspend activity
Vulnerability risk 4	2	2	2	Suspend activity
Vulnerability risk 5	2	2	2	Suspend activity
	WBGT 22 C	WBGT 25 C	WBGT 27 C	WBGT 32 C

Vulnerability risk rating for staff who work in outdoor heat above 22c using Wet Bulb Global Temperature system.

The concept is that the higher the score of multiplying the matrix against the individuals score it gives a maximum time exposed to heat and a requirement for water.

CWU Heat Illness Guide produced June 2025 also emphasises the importance of water intake.

HEAT ILLNESS GUIDE

FOR CWU MEMBERS

KEY FACT: HEAT ILLNESS HAPPENS IN THE UK AS WELL AS IN WARM CLIMATES.

Heat illness or heat related injury can cause a lot of damage and in some cases heat illness can be fatal.

DEFINITION OF HEAT ILLNESS

Heat illness refers to a spectrum of disorders caused by environmental conditions whereby individuals become quickly unwell because of a rise in core body temperature.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

- Heat illness happens when a body gains more heat than it loses.
- Our body temperature rises when working or exercising or undertaking any manual activity during any increase in air temperature, or when in direct sunshine or when heat amplification occurs by reflecting off buildings and other surfaces. Heat amplification can often occur in vehicles too.
- Heat is normally lost mainly by sweating. Usually, this helps the body to cool down and continue to function efficiently. In humid conditions, sweating doesn't work as well, and if too many clothes (or the wrong sort of clothes) are worn the body may keep in more heat than it should.
- If more heat is gained than lost, our body temperature rises too much, which may lead to heat illness. HEAT STORAGE = HEAT GAINED – HEAT LOST
- Risk Factors – You are at greater risk of heat illness if you are: • Tired • Hungry • Thirsty (dehydrated) • Or if identified as a vulnerable person due to another health condition.
- An individual should be presumed to have heat illness if they experience or display any of the following: • Agitation • Nausea or vomiting • Cramps • Dizziness.
- Worsening signs of heat illness include staggering, loss of coordination, collapse, loss of consciousness.
- Where heat illness signs exist, STOP activity and seek medical assistance.

RISK BEHAVIOURS TO AVOID

DO NOT ignore any warning signs, if you or someone else you know or are working with start to display early signs of heat injury or heat illness you can call 111 to seek immediate guidance and advice or immediately call 999 if urgent First Aid is required.

DO NOT restrict water intake, even if you have limited access to toilet facilities you should still drink enough water to stay hydrated and return to work to use the toilet as required. Dehydration can be mild, moderate or severe depending on how much water your body is lacking, an early symptom to look out for is thirst.

DO NOT directly seek the sun, this is dangerous especially during physical work activity, seeking shade wherever possible can reduce how hot a person feels by more than 10°C

FURTHER GUIDANCE CAN BE FOUND BY SCANNING THE QR CODES BELOW:







 @DaveWardGS
  The Communications Union
  @CWUNews
  #TheCWU
  CWU.ORG

4. RAISE AWARENESS OF 'DELIBERATE DEHYDRATION' RISKS FOR OUTDOOR WORKERS.

A report in 2019 by the Royal Society of Public Health cited that over half (56%) of the public restrict fluid intake due to concern over lack of toilet facilities.

Taking the P***: the decline of the great British public toilet

Older people, Policy, High street, General 23 May 2019

RSPH has published a report revealing the dire state of our public conveniences and its impact on the public's health

Deliberate dehydration can seriously affect health and exacerbate existing medical problems. The increasing decline in public toilets is a threat to health, mobility, and equality. The lack of public toilets disproportionately affects people with ill health or disability, the elderly, women, outdoor workers and the homeless.

With Climate change comes the need to be drinking more, with drinking more comes the need to go to the toilet more.

A recent study by Sheffield University on outdoor workers in the delivery sector identified

- Significant Work intensification
- Driving without due rest due to time constraints.
- Poor Access to toilet facilities.

Trade unions must continue to campaign for more organisations to support schemes such as the 'Just can't wait' and champion the retail shops that are fully recognising and supporting the 'just can't wait' scheme, which allows outdoor workers and members of the public with bowel or bladder disability or certain health conditions to access in store toilets upon presentation of the 'just can't wait' card.

Co-Op (4,050 stores)

M&S (Over 950 stores)

Argos, (over 800 stores)

Superdrug (over 800 stores)

Waitrose. (349 stores)

B&Q (Over 300 stores)

White stuff. (Over 100 stores)

Zara. (Over 100 stores)

In addition to the above, do trade unions need to raise awareness of Toilet Map UK? This is a website aims to be a complete, up-to-date, sustainable source of toilet locations. It's the UK's largest database of publicly accessible toilets with over 14,000 facilities.

<https://www.toiletmap.org.uk/loos/319be340e8d51ca7c2bd210d>

Toilet Map UK simply seek of advice of all publicly accessible toilets, that means all toilets that the public can access without needing to be a customer.

This includes:

- public toilets
- toilets in train stations, bus stations, service/petrol stations, tube stations, ferry terminals, airports and other transport networks
- shopping centre toilets
- toilets in public buildings, such as town halls, libraries, hospitals, museums and leisure centres
- toilets in other businesses where the business agrees that the public can use their toilets without having to buy anything. These are often part of Community Toilet Schemes (run by councils) and can include shops, cafes, supermarkets, restaurants, hotels and pubs.

5. Finally HEAT INJURY must be taken more seriously by employers.

'Heat Injury' recording (rather than anything else) is hugely important, once any worker has suffered loss (such as absence) because of an exposure to an unsafe condition caused by severe weather, it needs to be seen as a work-related recordable event once it has resulted in the incapacitation of any worker.

