

## What do you know about **TEMPERATURE** in your Place of Work?

The thermal environment we live and work in can be influenced by many factors, which decide how hot or cold we feel.

It is a complex issue despite all the research that has been done over the years, and is dependent on the subjective evaluation of the individual. It is very difficult to adjust a workplace to please everyone, but it is possible to create a temperature range that will not cause stress. There may be some discomfort for some people but no harm can occur.

For **heat strain** (harm to the body) to occur work needs to be carried out in extremes of temperature, although this too can vary considerably between individuals.

**Heat stress** is the total heat load on the body from all sources.

We can divide thermal environments into three broad categories, but the boundaries are not always obvious.

They are:

**Thermal comfort;** is described as the ideal temperature for people to work in when they are not conscious of either being too hot or too cold.

**Thermal discomfort;** is the uncomfortable place between a temperature that is ideal and one that will cause a person to be harmed.

**Thermal Stress;** is where the temperature in the workplace will cause clearly defined medical conditions and can be fatal.

There are however, six main factors that influence how **hot** or **cold** we feel –

- **Air temperature** – how hot or cold is the air around us
- **Humidity** – moisture content of the air
- **Radiant heat** – emitted from anything hot, such as sunlight, a furnace or heater
- **Air speed** – wind speed or air speed will, in most situations, cool a person
- **Physical activity** – as our level of physical activity increases, so does our heat production
- **Clothing** – clothing insulates us from our environment to a greater or lesser degree
- Other factors that may affect the way individuals feel include:
  - Age;
  - State of health;
  - Body build and weight;
  - Use of prescription medicines;
  - Use of substances such as alcohol;
  - Use of illegal substances such as cannabis.

### **In summary:**

As this is the hot time of the year it is very important to remember a few things;

**Drink plenty of fluids.** If it is very hot you may need to drink more than you think you need. Signs that indicate you are not drinking enough include dark coloured urine, or urinating less frequently than normal. For most people, heat at work will not cause any real health problems unless they become dehydrated. Employees should be able to get a drink of water at any time during the working day without going far from their workstation.

**NOTE:** you are 10% dehydrated before you begin to feel thirsty !!!!!!!