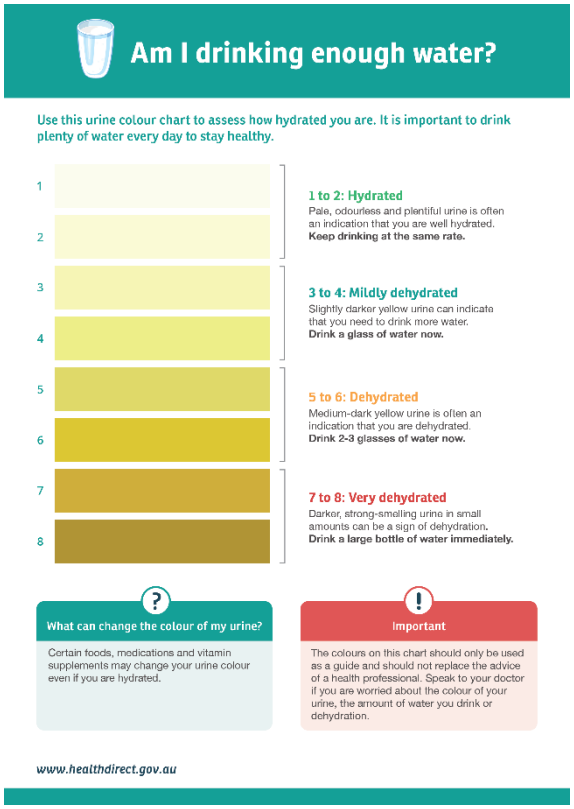
CICA – Vic / Tas Branch
Crane Safety Bulletin
#281 February 2021

Greetings all. We are in the height of Summer, so today's Bulletin is about avoiding heat stress and the importance of staying hydrated.

According to Dr. Julian Seifter, a kidney specialist and associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, an adult needs to drink 1 – 1.5 litres of water a day to prevent dehydration and to keep our kidneys functioning optimally.



Does dehydration impact work safety?

Dehydration can impact cognitive performance including visual vigilance, tension, anxiety, fatigue and visual memory. Dehydration can also affect physical performance.

Researchers have found that even mild dehydration impairs the cognitive performance and mood of men.

Due to the labor-intensive nature of most of construction tasks and summertime temperatures most parts of Australia experience, it is important to ensure that everyone remains hydrated and avoids heat stress.

What is heat illness?

According to WorkSafe Victoria, heat illness occurs when the body is exposed to heat but cannot cool itself sufficiently.

There are several contributors to increasing the heat load on the body, including:

- ambient air temperature
- relative humidity
- physical activity.
- being exposed to direct sunlight, especially during the hours of the day when the sun is strongest (11 – 3)
- heat reflecting from glass, metals, and other construction materials
- strenuous work for long periods of time
- heat that is transferred from machinery / engines
- clothing and personal protective equipment like helmets, long sleeves, tool belts and masks
- alcohol and caffeine consumption have a bearing on hydration
- fatigue related to poor or disrupted sleep patterns

Why this is important

As well as taking care of one another and maximising efficiency, Work Health and Safety legislation also requires that a *PCBU* must manage *risks*, so far 'as is reasonably practicable'.

Identifying hazards, reviewing work tasks, temperature monitoring, checking in with workers and keeping incident records are all ways to ensure that you don't end up in the 'hot seat'.

Resources for managing the risk

1. WorkSafe Victoria has prepared a document that outlines how workplaces can prevent workers from getting a heat related illness
2. Safe Work Australia offers a downloadable guide for *Managing the risks of working in heat*
3. The Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists offer a qualitative risk assessment tool and app.
4. The Queensland Government have developed a Heat Stress Basic Calculator

Keep cool, drink water and above all *Stay Safe -CICA*