



Summer Hazards

Background: *The advent of summer's heat and humidity brings out several significant hazards for NJPHA members: Swimming Pools and Outdoor Cooking, as well as employee exposure to summer heat. The pool and cooking information is in response to requests to reissue these on a seasonal basis.*

Swimming Pools

The National Safety Council estimates that 300 people drown in home swimming pools each year. The high number of small children in public housing only increases the potential for injury from this source.

While the NJPHA-JIF cannot officially prohibit tenant owned pools, we strongly urge executive directors and local managers to **discourage** pools. Most of your tenants do not have homeowner's insurance, and in the event of a claim, a sympathetic judge is very likely to find involvement by the Authority despite Title 59 immunity. You, as an authority, are not likely to be in an effective position to mandate and enforce needed supervision for children, which is a key element in pool safety.

Inclusion of a statement regarding pools should be incorporated into the lease agreement to make sure the issues are communicated to the tenant. Counsel should be involved in drafting a statement. A notice should be posted **annually** to remind tenants of the Authority's position.

Alternative means of getting wet, through spray play apparatus, which do not cause water to accumulate, are preferred. Depending on water restrictions, many fire departments will provide legal heads for installation on fire hydrants.

Outdoor Cooking

The primary source for regulation of use of outdoor cooking apparatus should be your local fire marshal, who brings not only fire prevention expertise, but also the authority of local code enforcement to the problem. Take advantage of this resource if possible for establishing a position, and for educating tenants on fire prevention issues.

It should be clearly communicated that use of grills, whether they are charcoal-burning or propane-fueled, are not acceptable on balconies. At minimum, cooking should be done at least twenty feet from the building. Grills need to be attended at all times when in use. A fire extinguisher should be available for emergency purposes. Propane bottles **should never** be brought into the building. Maintenance staff should be alert for bottles when they enter properties for routine purposes, especially if the tenant is in a ground floor, garden apartment, and owns a gas grill.

As an alternative, consider designating a communal area for tenant cooking that is an appropriate distance from buildings and clear of other hazards.

Heat Exposure

Workers exposed to hot and humid conditions are at risk of heat illness, especially those doing heavy work tasks or using bulky protective clothing and equipment. Some workers might be at greater risk than others if they have not built up a tolerance to hot conditions.

What is heat illness? The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke requires immediate medical attention and can result in death.

How can heat illness be prevented? Remember three simple words: **water, rest, shade**. Housing Authorities should educate their workers on how drinking water often, taking breaks, and limiting time in the heat can help prevent heat illness. They should include these prevention steps in worksite training and plans. Employers should also teach employees to gradually build up to heavy work in hot conditions because this helps you build tolerance to the heat - or become acclimated. They should take steps that help workers become acclimated, especially workers who are new to working outdoors in the heat or have been away from work for a week or more. Lastly, during the first week of work, employers should gradually increase workloads and allow more frequent breaks. You should plan for an emergency and know what to do - acting quickly can save lives!

Treat victims of heat exhaustion by:

- moving person to a cool, shaded area;
- provide cool water to drink;
- cool the person by fanning them;
- cool the skin with a wet cloth;
- lay victim on his or her back and raise the victim's legs 6 to 8 inches if he or she is dizzy;
- lay victim on his or her side if nausea occurs;
- loosen and remove heavy clothing; and
- stay with the victim and call for medical assistance

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact your risk management consultant, or NJPHA JIF safety director, Jim Rhoads at 610-937-2694 or by e-mail at james_rhoads@pmagroup.com.

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