



Heat Exhaustion While Working Outdoors

WHAT HAPPENED?

Geotechnical investigation drilling was being undertaken for the relocation of the HAM-DEV A line near Ruakura. A consultant engineering geologist was on site supervising the drilling contractors and logging core. The weather was sunny with temperatures estimated to be in the mid 20's.

The consultant was wearing full Transpower PPE and worked all day in the direct sunlight, apart from a 20 min break around lunchtime. She carried and drank 2 litres of water throughout the day.

During the middle of the afternoon she developed a headache began to feel unwell. Her condition became much worse on returning home after work, and she was driven to the Waikato Hospital A&E. Her illness was diagnosed as heat exhaustion by hospital staff and she treated by intravenous administration of fluids. She was discharged later that night and was given 2 days off work to rest and recover.

IMMEDIATE ACTION TAKEN

- Large container of water made available on the site and used by staff to avoid dehydration
- Regular rest breaks scheduled and taken during the day
- Portable shade protection (gazebo) provided for field staff
- Lighter, breathable overalls worn when working away from the overhead lines

ROOT CAUSE

While the JSA developed during job planning identified the risks of exposure to the direct sun when working outdoors the associated controls were not effectively implemented in the field. It appears the geologist felt compelled to work continuously to keep up with the drillers recovering core, and by doing so, endangered her health.

LEARNINGS

- When working outdoors in the heat it is important to always stay hydrated, and take regular rest breaks out of the sun
- Know the early symptoms of dehydration & heat exhaustion and take immediate action to address the situation
- Assess the risks of wearing full PPE in hot weather and relax requirements where it is clearly demonstrated that use of a PPE item presents a greater risk than non-use

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Incident Date	December 10, 2018