

EXCESSIVE HEAT & HUMIDITY

It is not the heat, but the humidity that makes you uncomfortable in the hot weather. How hot you feel is a result of both air temperature and humidity. The *U.S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration* or *NOAA* developed the Heat Index as a single value that takes both temperature and humidity into account to determine the apparent temperature. This is how hot the weather will feel to you.

Why does humidity affect how hot I feel? The answer is sweat! Humidity is a measure of how much moisture (water) is in the air. Warmer air can hold more moisture. Your body cools itself when overheated by producing sweat. However, it's not the act of sweating that cools your body; it's the evaporation of the sweat from your body that does the trick. In moist air (humid air) sweat does not evaporate as quickly as it does in drier air (less humid). Humidity reduces your body's ability to cool itself, making you feel hotter than the air temperature alone would make you feel. The opposite can be equally problematic. Sweat evaporates very quickly in hot, dry climates, so quickly you may not even realize that you're sweating. This can cause you to become severely dehydrated very quickly if you do not drink enough water throughout the day.

Extreme heat advisories are a regular occurrence in the warm weather months and are typically announced during local weather broadcasts on both TV and radio. These advisories are issued by *NOAA* to indicate when there will be excessive, extended heat in an area. They are based on the predicted heat index values. The following are *NOAA*'s categories for such advisories:

- **Excessive Heat Outlook** is issued when the potential exists for extended excessive heat (heat index of 105-110 °F) over the next 3-7 days. This gives you time to check on supplies like extra water coolers.
- **Excessive Heat Watch** is issued when excessive heat could occur with the next 24 to 72 hours.
- **Excessive Heat Advisory** is issued when the heat index could be uncomfortable or inconvenient, but not life threatening if proper precautions are taken.
- **Excessive Heat Warning** is issued when the heat index will be high enough to be life threatening within the next 24 hours. This warning indicates that the excessive heat is imminent or has a very high probability of occurring.

Following these advisories could be the difference between life and death and need to be adhered to while not on the job as well to keep you and your family through the warm weather months.

