

REPORT #:
OR-2025-01

REPORT DATE:
06/24/2026

INCIDENT DATE:
07/08/2025

WORKER:
24-year-old male

INDUSTRY:
Landscaping

OCCUPATION:
Landscaper

SCENE:
High outdoor temperatures

LOCATION:
Outside apartment complex

EVENT TYPE:
Heat-related fatality



Outside the apartment complex where tree trimming work occurred. (Photo courtesy of OR-OSHA).

HEAT-RELATED FATALITY NARRATIVE

Landscaper Heat-Related Fatality—Oregon

SUMMARY

On July 9th, 2025, a 24-year-old Caucasian landscaping employee died from environmental heat exposure. He fell ill the day prior while performing landscaping work. The outside temperature at the time was 92°F (heat index was 91°F). It was his third day on the job.

The employer in this case was a very small landscaping company that consisted of the two company owners and one employee (the decedent). On his first day of work, the employee only worked a few hours. His second day of work was a full day, but this work took place at the employer's shop. On the day the employee fell ill, his third day with the company, he was working outside at an apartment complex assisting with tree trimming work along with one of the company owners. He worked to keep the area clear while the trees were being trimmed, then moved the tree branches into piles. He also assisted with moving and loading the tree branches into the woodchipper. He began work at 9:30 am that morning. At approximately 4:00 pm, the employee appeared disoriented and fell to the ground. The owner who had been working with the employee called 911 and was instructed to cool the employee with ice until first responders arrived.

Emergency responders arrived at the scene at 4:21 pm and transported him to the hospital. His internal body temperature when they arrived on site was 107.9°F. He passed away the next day at the hospital. According to the medical examiner's report, the employee died of hyperthermia due to environmental heat exposure.

In this case, the employee had recently been prescribed a new medication by his doctor. This medication may have potentially increased his susceptibility to heat illness.

The employer did not have a heat illness prevention program. Although the employee had been provided water breaks and access to shade, he had not been trained in heat illness prevention or identifying the symptoms of heat-related illness. There was also no acclimatization plan in place to help the new employee adjust to working in the heat. The employer was aware that the employee was taking a new medication but did not make any adjustments based on this.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

The following were found to be key contributing factors in this incident:

- The employee was new to the job, and there was no acclimatization schedule implemented to help his body adjust to working in hot conditions.
- The employer did not have a heat illness prevention program and did not provide training to the employee on how to recognize symptoms of heat-related illness.
- Personal factors, including a newly prescribed medication, may have made the employee more susceptible to heat illness.

REQUIREMENTS

According to Oregon OSHA, employers must:

- Develop and implement a heat illness prevention plan that includes procedures for providing water, rest, shade; weather monitoring; employee training and acclimatization; emergency response procedures; and supervisor responsibilities during hot weather (OAR 437-002-0156).
- Provide drinking water, shade or a cool area where employees can rest, training for supervisors and employees, and an effective acclimatization plan, when the heat index is above 80°F.
 - The heat-illness prevention training must include information on factors that may increase susceptibility to heat-related illness, such as certain medications and medical conditions.
 - The acclimatization plan for new or unacclimated employees should gradually increase employees' exposure to heat and physical workload to allow the body to adapt and reduce the risk of heat related illness.
- Implement additional measures when the heat index is above 90°F, including appropriate rest/break schedules for employees, monitor employees for signs of heat illness, have an effective method of communication, and designate an employee to call for emergency medical services if needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FACE investigators concluded that to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Prioritize an acclimatization plan for new employees. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends an acclimatization schedule that gradually increases work over 7 to 14 days. For a new employee, exposure to a hot environment should be limited to a maximum of 20% of the workday on the first day of work, and increased by no more than 20% on each additional day. Physical fitness should also be considered, as it may affect the time required for acclimatization.
- Encourage workers to consult their healthcare provider if they have questions or concerns about their personal risk factors or medications that may impact their susceptibility to heat-related illness.
- Implement additional protective measures when an employee discloses a medical condition or personal factor that may increase their susceptibility to heat-related illness, while also respecting their privacy and confidentiality. This could include closer monitoring for signs and symptoms of heat-related illness, providing additional rest breaks, and/or modifying work as needed to reduce heat exposure or physical workload.

RESOURCES

Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA) [2025]. OAR 437-002-0156: Heat illness prevention. (pp. J-93–J-110). <https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHArules/div2/div2J.pdf>

Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA) [2025]. Heat illness prevention rules: Key requirements (Fact Sheet FS-91). <https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHAPubs/factsheets/fs91.pdf>

Oregon Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (OR-FACE) Program [2025]. *Heat illness hazard alert*. <https://www.ohsu.edu/sites/default/files/2025-11/heat-illness-hazard-alert-final.pdf>



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) [2025]. Heat and medications: Guidance for clinicians. <https://www.cdc.gov/heat-health/hcp/clinical-guidance/heat-and-medications-guidance-for-clinicians.html>

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- This narrative was developed by the Oregon State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (OR-FACE). For more information on the OR-FACE program visit: <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-institute-occupational-health-sciences/oregon-fatality-assessment-and-control-evaluation>