

# The Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association of SA Inc



## WHS&E - Hot Weather Policy and Procedures

### STATEMENT

The Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association of South Australia Incorporated (PQSA) is committed to ensuring the welfare of all employees, volunteers, clients and contractors by providing them, so far as is reasonable practicable, with a healthy and safe environment, free from injury and health risks in the extreme hot weather conditions of a South Australian Summer and fire danger season.

Approved by: 	Date: February 2013
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------

**The Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Association of SA Inc.(PQSA) is incorporated under the *Association Incorporation Act 1985 (SA)* and conducts its business through operating Divisions, namely Support Services and HomeCare+.**

## **SCOPE**

PQSA recognises that working and exercising in hot weather can lead to health problems and will take into consideration the weather conditions when planning outside work, activities, events and functions.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Catastrophic** – These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. If a fire starts and takes hold it will be extremely difficult to control and will take significant firefighting resources and cooler conditions to bring it under control.

**Employee** – any one employed under a contract of employment by PQSA on full-time, part-time or casual capacity including collectors.

**Extreme** - These are very hot, dry and windy conditions for a bush or grass fire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be unpredictable, move very fast and very difficult for the fire fighters to bring under control.

**Heat Stress** – Is caused by hot climatic conditions, heavy work in moderately hot conditions, hot work processes and work where heavy protective clothing must be worn and can result in a number of heat related conditions e.g. heat exhaustion.

**Hot weather** – when the outdoor temperature exceeds 35 degrees Celsius.

**Risk Assessment** – Means analyzing the degree of risk involved and the impact it will have on employees, volunteers, clients and contractors.

**Severe** – These are hot, dry and possibly windy conditions for a bush or grass fire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be hard for the fire fighters to bring under control.

**Very High, High, Low-Moderate** – If a fire starts, it is likely to be controlled in these conditions and homes can provide safety.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Managers/Supervisors** – are responsible for ensuring;

- ◆ All workers, clients and visitors under their control are aware and understand this policy.
- ◆ Must ensure a risk assessment is undertaken for all new work procedures, functions and events undertaken by their individual divisions with weather conditions being taken into consideration.
- ◆ In the event of hot weather being predicted it is the Manager/Supervisor's responsibility to ensure this policy and its related procedures are implemented.

**Manager, Human Resources** – is responsible for ensuring;

- ◆ The circulation and ongoing availability of this policy to all workers, clients and visitors involved in working for or at PQSA workplaces, events or functions.
- ◆ Training and group awareness campaigns undertaken on a regular annual basis.
- ◆ The policy is monitored, annually reviewed and updated.

**Employees, volunteers, clients and contractors** – are responsible for ensuring;

- ◆ Their health and safety by monitoring fire conditions in their region and their health and safety during periods of hot weather.

## **POLICY**

PQSA recognize that working and exercising in extreme weather conditions or for prolonged periods of time in the sun can result in health problems, therefore will take into consideration the weather conditions when planning outside work, activities, events and functions.

All employees, volunteers, clients and contractors undertaking work or involved in PQSA activities, functions or events should be aware of the conditions and the symptoms associated with hot weather and sun exposure.

### **Personal Safety**

**Skin Cancer** develops when the cells that makes up the skin is damaged causing them to grow abnormally.

**Heat exhaustion** is the short-term health effect of being exposed to unbearable hot conditions. The victim has clammy, moist skin, suffers weakness and fatigue, nausea, vomiting, headache and giddiness. Sometimes fainting may occur. It's caused by dehydration following heavy sweating.

**Heat Fainting (syncope)** is the result of a pooling of blood to the peripheral areas of the body (e.g. skin, arms, legs) and away from the brain. Fainting results from an inadequate supply of blood (and therefore oxygen) to the brain. It can occur quite suddenly even without physical activity.

**Heat Stroke** is a condition of potentially fatal heat stress. It occurs when the body's temperature control mechanism become overloaded and break down completely. The victim exhibits hot, dry skin, rapidly rising body temperature, physical collapse, loss of consciousness and convulsions. Continue increase in core body temperature (the result of breakdown of the body's temperature control mechanisms) results in cell damage, including vulnerable body organs such as the brain.

**Heat Fever (hyperpyrexia)** is a partial heat stroke (heat hyperpyrexia or heat fever) which occurs when the body's temperature control mechanism break down, but not completely. The symptoms of heat hyperpyrexia are similar to those in the earlier stage of heat stroke. Heat hyperpyrexia, although a milder form of heat stroke can still result in brain disorders.

**Chronic Heat Fatigue** is characterised by reduced performance capacity, an inability to concentrate and other psychological changes similar to stress.

**Heat Cramp** is characterised by painful spasms in one or more skeletal muscles. Heat cramp primarily occurs in persons who sweat profusely in heat without restoring their body's salt balance. Resting in a cool place and drinking saline solution normally alleviates cramp.

*A person suffering from a heat related condition needs immediate medical attention. they should be removed at once to a cool area and efforts made to reduce body temperature e.g. a cold-water bath. This is an emergency situation, seek immediate medical help call 000.*

### **Worker and Client Safety**

Clients and workers living and working in High Fire Danger Areas must know the Fire Danger Ratings for their region and must follow the instructions of the Country Fire Service (CFS).

## **PROCEDURES**

All divisional Managers will ensure prior to the commencement of all new work, worksites, activities or events, that a Risk Assessment is undertaken in accordance with the Risk Assessment Management Policy. If there is a risk of prolonged exposure to sun or hot weather and work or activities are to be undertaken outside or partially outside the following control measures must be implemented:

- ◆ Provision of plentiful and easily accessible cool water
- ◆ Provision of cool and easily accessible rest areas.
- ◆ Provision of 30+ Sun Screen.

## Extreme or Catastrophic Fire Alert

In the case of a catastrophic or extreme fire danger rating for their region the worker must contact their Manager/Supervisor to advise of their availability. No worker would be expected to attend shifts should they, their family or property be under threat.

On days of Catastrophic or Extreme Fire Danger Ratings:

- ◆ Employees living in high fire prone areas who determine that there is a need to remain at home or evacuate their homes will not be required to attend shifts, but they are required to call the office and appraise them of the situation.
- ◆ Employees in these areas will not be sent to clients living in remote or isolated areas.
- ◆ Clients will be notified that shifts are being canceled and alerted to the catastrophic fire danger in their area.
- ◆ Emergency Services will be contacted and alerted to the potential risk to our clients living in isolated areas.
- ◆ Office staff will keep in contact with clients to ensure their safety.
- ◆ Clients residing in HomeCare+ accommodation in regional areas will be moved to CFS designated safety areas, Support Workers will be required to remain with clients until they are able to return to their home.

All regional and high fire risk metropolitan areas will have a Fire Safety Plan included in the Client Support Plan.

## Travelling at High Fire Risk periods

Employees required to travel for work purposes are not to travel in or through areas that have been classified Extreme or Catastrophic. Workers must:

- ◆ Contact the local emergency services to obtain instructions of where to locate to ensure their safety.
- ◆ Notify a Manager/Supervisor and apprise them of their location and safety requirements.
- ◆ Keep in telephone contact with the Manager/Supervisor.
- ◆ Do NOT leave the safe area until given instruction by the appropriate emergency services.
- ◆ Notify the Manager/Supervisor when leaving the safe area to return home or back to the workplace.

## Administrative Controls

Managers/Supervisors or their nominee will:

- ◆ Advise employees, volunteers, clients and contractors of suitable clothing for the hot weather.
- ◆ Reschedule outside work to cooler parts of the day.
- ◆ Employees, volunteers, clients and contractors working outside in hot weather conditions have a fifteen (15) minute break every hour and should be encouraged to move to a shaded area and have a drink of water.
- ◆ Encourage employees, volunteers, clients and contractors to have a drink (non-alcoholic) regularly.
- ◆ Encourage employees, volunteers, clients and contractors to be sun smart and 'Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek Shade and Slide on the Sunnies'.

## **Elimination Controls**

- ◆ Managers or their nominee responsible for activities, functions or events will monitor the weather forecast the night before an activity, function or event.
- ◆ No work, activity or function is to be conducted outside during the hottest part of the day 1300hrs to 1800hrs on days of extreme heat 38 degrees Celsius or above.

## **RELATED LEGISLATION**

- ◆ Work, Health and Safety Act 2012
- ◆ Work, Health and Safety Regulations 2012
- ◆ CFS Fact Sheet – Fire Danger Ratings.

## **SUPPORTING PQSA DOCUMENTATION**

- ◆ Work, Health and Safety Management System
- ◆ Risk Assessment Management Policy and Procedures

## **BREACHES OF THIS POLICY**

A **breach** of this policy is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Ignorance of these procedures will not generally be accepted as an excuse for non-compliance. Only in extreme circumstances and where such ignorance can be demonstrated to have occurred through no fault of the individual concerned will PQSA accept such an argument.

## **DISTRIBUTION AND REVIEW**

PQSA will ensure all persons engaged to provide services either paid or unpaid will be aware of this policy and will have easy access to it in an appropriate format. All policies are to be reviewed on a periodic basis or when legislation or government policy determines.