

California Heat Illness Prevention Study (CHIPS)

The purpose of this study is to collect scientifically accurate data of the exposure of California agricultural workers to heat. Currently regulations require employee training of “the environmental and personal risk factors for heat illness, as well as the added burden of heat load on the body caused by exertion, clothing, and personal protective equipment” among other important topics. On days when the temperature is likely to exceed 95 °F supervisors are expected to schedule slower paced, less physically demanding work during the hottest parts of the day, among other adjustments. But little is known about the effect different tasks have on a workers’ internal heat generation, nor how work in different crop types (especially the height or color of the crop / tree) factor in to the heat equation. We hope with the help of your workers to better understand what puts field workers at risk of heat illness.



WHAT WILL BE STUDIED?

We will monitor workers before and after their work shift, and will not need to take them out of their regular tasks in the work day. The workers’ body temperature will be monitored using a temperature thermometer “pill” that will send a signal to the recorder that workers will be wearing. This pill has been used for over 15 years by many studies, is approved by the Food and Drug Administration of the USA, and has proven to be very safe. In addition over their work shift they will wear a heart rate monitor and a heat recorder ‘pen’ that logs the air temperature and humidity. We will need to ask them some general questions about their health and other factors that can impact heat illness, weigh them, and after the work shift ends, ask some more questions about their water intake, how they felt, etc. Workers will only take part in the study for one workday and, depending on the work force, we will monitor up to 6 workers per day. They will be volunteers, but we can give each person up to \$40 to compensate them for their help. There will also be a couple of weather stations set up around the work fields. We do not expect our activities to shorten the workers’ work day or prevent them from completing usual tasks. A pilot study has already been completed in Yolo County.



WHO/WHEN?

There will be up to 5 people on the University of California, Davis research team. One Graduate student team leader (plus coordinator on first day) will be responsible for the equipment monitoring and 2-3 assistants will help. They will set up shade tables, a tent for measurement and refreshments. We will also be happy to provide officially recognized training to the work force on the prevention of heat illness, and assistance with the farm illness and injury plans that are now required. The timing of our visit would be worked out to fit into your schedule.

CONTACTS:

Please contact the following people for more information about this study. We will be very happy to answer your questions and give more details so you may decide whether to participate.

Study Coordinator: Diane Mitchell (530) 752 1810 dcmitchell@ucdavis.edu
Principal Investigator: Marc Schenker, MD., (530) 752 5676 mbschenker@ucdavis.edu