

Information Sheet – Thermal Comfort

Regulations require that during working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable. To help monitor this, a thermometer will be available in each workplace.

The temperature in workrooms should normally be at least 16 degrees centigrade. Where work involves severe physical effort, then a temperature of 13 degrees centigrade will be seen as reasonable. There is no maximum working temperature however it is expected that employers will determine what is reasonable once the many local environmental and operational factors have been considered.

The Health and Safety Executive suggest that the following actions can assist in creating thermal comfort during hot weather:



- Putting insulating material around heat generating equipment or pipes;
- Ensuring that windows can be opened (they should not be opened past the building line where persons can walk past the window, and should not be opened in a fashion that would permit persons to fall out);
- Providing fans, e.g. desk, pedestal or ceiling-mounted fans;
- Shading windows with blinds or using reflective film to reduce the heating effect of the sun;
- Siting workstations away from direct sunlight and places or plant which radiate heat;
- Providing additional facilities, e.g. cold water dispensers (water is preferable to caffeine or carbonated drinks);
- Introducing work systems to limit exposure, such as flexible working patterns, e.g. early start/finish times;
- Introducing flexible working practices such as flexible hours or earlier starts to the working day to avoid the worst effects of working in exceptionally high temperatures;
- Providing air-cooling or air-conditioning plant;
- Relaxing formal dress codes, but you must ensure that personal protective equipment is provided and used if required;
- Allowing sufficient breaks to enable employees to get cold drinks or to cool down.

The HSE suggest ways of creating thermal comfort during periods of cold weather. This includes:

- providing adequate heating in the workplace or local heating such as temporary heaters (please note that temporary heaters will require you to review your fire risk assessment);

- reducing exposure to the cold by separating cold products or cold areas from areas where people are working;
- reducing draughts;
- providing the appropriate type of protective clothing;
- providing insulated duckboards or other floor coverings or special footwear where workers have to stand for long periods on cold floors.

Practical Notes

- If it is too hot, seek assurances that the heating for the floor is off.
- If humidity is too low, it may be useful to put a small container of water on a shelf (away from equipment and materials that may be damaged should it be knocked over). Formal humidifying equipment can also be used but may be noisy and expensive.
- Make sure all electrical equipment not being used is switched off.
- In general terms if air conditioning units are being used, they will only be effective if the windows of the workplace are closed. Open windows in any part of the work compartment will make air cooling ineffective.



If local managers have concerns about the thermal comfort then they should undertake a risk assessment and use this process to develop control measures that are relevant to the local conditions.

More information on the issues can be found on the HSE's web page or by contacting **Safety & Wellbeing team** healthandsafety@northlan.gov.uk

The HSE have published guidance specifically for managers and employees aimed at providing more information on the actions each can take during times of high or low temperatures.