It's Summertime and the living is easy...

Warmer weather and longer days for most bring to mind a more relaxed and carefree approach to living and working. Employers know, however that when they leave winter behind, they have to prepare their companies for some of the safety challenges the spring and summer seasons bring.

One of the most prevalent concerns for the industrial workplace is dealing with the effect rising temperatures can have on employees' health and productivity. Even controlled indoor environments cannot always divert enough of the heat through exhausts and other redirection measures to compensate for external heat factors.

For the outdoor worker, heat is just one of the many concerns. Safety conscious employers such as a power company are supplying their employees with insect repellents to ward off chiggers and tics, sunscreens, dog deterrents and poison ivy and oak itch cleanser.

Important personal protective equipment (PPE) for a major winery cellar crew during harvest times includes rainwear and tinted safety glasses to reduce the glare from the sun reflecting off bright white holding tanks.

The Heat Is On
Gone are the days when simple human tenacity and salt tablets were the best remedies against heat-related illness and injury. Breakthroughs in health and safety-related products are now making it possible for employees to work in less than perfect conditions comfortably, safely and productively.

Even so, most company safety directors, when asked, feel new product innovation is only part of the answer. How well you can communicate your safety message through employee education, motivation and interaction is the other vital part of any safety equipment.

Proactive Safety Measures Keep Companies One Step Ahead
The winery has put both management and money behind their safety philosophy. Dave Burger, safety director, has put a major emphasis on documented training and education.

Burger states, "The winery commits to 15 minute tailgate meetings for all our production employees every ten days. Topics vary and are sometimes seasonal in nature, with input on the focus coming from our employees."

In addition, we hold monthly safety committee meetings. Our committee is a cross-functional team of winery employees and we encourage an open forum," adds Burger. "We start out with the goal of providing solutions to common issues and concerns and end up fostering teamwork., boosting morale and achieving a level of understanding about where our safety vulnerabilities and opportunities are." Measurable results from their stepped-up safety effort in 1996 included a 30% decrease in lost workdays over 1995. Burger also taps into the Magid-exclusive Zero Investment Program (Z.I.I.P.), which provides his company with a fully stocked inventory of PPE on a consignment basis. "With the Z.I.I.P. program, I have the right PPE on hand, helping us manage the
total cost of providing these vital products," states Burger. "Magid has been instrumental in helping us cut our total cost for PPE through innovative programs such as Z.I.I.P. and by providing us with the right PPE at the best possible price."

A snowmobile, all terrain vehicle and personal watercraft manufacturer, has spent the last three years developing a comprehensive corporate safety program. Loss control supervisor, Vivian Jefferson, gives high marks to programs that focus on associate input at all levels. They, too, have a Safety Committee, and have initiated bi-weekly meetings of the management team acting as a Safety Steering Committee. They also conduct mandatory monthly safety training program.

"When a safety need arises or I see a trend that indicates we may have a safety issue, I don't hesitate to pick up the phone and call our Magid rep," adds Jefferson. I work very closely with him, showing him the function for which I need PPE and discussing the problems we're having. I've found his knowledge of what's new, what's available and what's coming to be invaluable in recommending the right products for our employees."

Like the winery, the recreational vehicle manufacturer has seen a measurable improvement in OSHA reported accidents with an 18% reduction over 1995 reportable and a 67% reduction in lost workdays.

**Stay on the Sunny Side**
A manufacturer of children's play products, another safety-conscious employer, doesn't reserve their fun quotient for marketing messages alone. They have opted for entertaining ways to deliver safety messages, too.

One vehicle that has enjoyed success at a manufacturing facility is the toy manufacturer's Quiz Program. Each week, employees take quizzes emphasizing timely safety issues, which may include topics such as how to avoid heat illness during a summer week. Employees can win from $50 to $300 if their entry is selected and the company was OSHA-accident free that week. Occupational hazard nurse Barbara Thorpe adds, "The end of the year quiz has even bigger stakes if we've reduced OSHA reportable over the previous year. In fact, at the end of 1996, three employees walked away with $918 each from the final giveaway."

Regular safety measure includes a ready supply of rehydration products. "The heat emanating from the plastic melting ovens can raise indoor temperatures 30 degrees," states Thorpe. "We can't always rely on employees seeking out electrolyte replacement fluids when they need them, so on especially hot days, we make the rounds, handing out Medi-Lyte and water."

Often, such safety encouragement isn't required. Harvey Krauss, employee development administrator at a custom producer of sand, permanent mold, die-cast and thermoplastic injection molded products, has found when it comes to personal comfort, many of his employees need nothing more than readily available supplies. Krauss states, "Many of the spring and summer safety issues directly relate to employee comfort. If you make the products available that will provide relief, be it MagidCool cooling bands, Gatorade or Sqwincher, employees will take the initiative to use them."

Krauss also relies on his Magid rep to make recommendations on safety-related products to address specific problems. Last summer, during an unbearable heat wave, Krauss turned to Magid for help in alleviating employee discomfort and lowering the risk of heat-related illness. "We brought in ten or twelve cooling products for a trial and had employees evaluate them. We found they helped relieve heat, keeping employees safe and productive for longer periods of time and decided to make the investment," says Krauss.
Krauss’ company purchased the cooling products and has added them to their tool crib. “Whatever Mother Nature has in store for us this summer heat-wise, thanks to Magid, we’re going to be ready,” adds Krauss.

By combining the appropriate personal protective equipment with a strong safety awareness and communication program, you can welcome those hot, hazy (and anything but lazy) days of summer with no fear!