

# RISKS IN AMBIENT WORK ENVIRONMENT

These are work related factors, such as thermal discomfort (heat or cold stress) and noise, which may cause harm to a health worker.



## Key facts

- ✓ Noise exposure above 85 dB(A) may cause temporary and permanent hearing damage, while lower noise levels may cause annoyance, lack of sleep, and increased stress.
- ✓ Heat stress can arise from prolonged work in full personal protective equipment (coveralls, gowns, hoods, goggles, boots, respirators). Working outdoors in situations of extreme cold or heat can cause serious health damage.
- ✓ Poor lighting in work areas can cause injuries, eye strain and loss of vision.

## Preventive measures:

- ✓ Thermal discomfort:
  - Provide adequate heating, ventilation and air conditioning.
  - Limit time spent in full PPE to a maximum of one hour, then rest in a cool place.
  - Allow enough time for acclimatization in workers who move to new regions.
  - Schedule heavy work at the coolest time of the day, allow frequent rest breaks in cool areas, limit exposure time, provide cool drinking water, and monitor hydration status.
  - Train workers to recognize heat related symptoms and report immediately.
  - Establish emergency procedures for workers who exhibit heat-related symptoms.
- ✓ Noise:
  - Keep noise levels in working areas as low as possible.
  - Noise exposure in health-care settings should not exceed 35 dB in most rooms in which patients are being treated or observed.
- ✓ Inadequate lighting:
  - Make better use of daylight and keep windows clean.
  - Choose light coloured matte paint which diffuses light and reduces glare.
  - Provide sufficient general and local artificial lighting without glare and maintain light sources in good condition.

### Source:

<https://www.who.int/tools/occupational-hazards-in-health-sector/risks-in-ambient-work-environment>

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<https://www.who.int/activities/protecting-health-and-safety-of-health-workers>

