What is the purpose of the heat alert program?

The heat alert program is designed to protect the health and well being of faculty, staff, and students working outdoors who are performing physical tasks considered to be moderate or heavy duty work in typical summer work clothes. When the outdoor temperature and weather conditions reach a level that could cause adverse health effects to the individuals described above, the University issues a heat alert.

Who is the heat alert program designed to protect?

The heat alert program was specifically designed to protect faculty, staff, and students working continuously outdoors who are performing physical tasks considered to be moderate or heavy duty work.

How does UNH determine when to issue a heat alert?

During business days in the summer the Office of Environmental Health and Safety makes measurements of the outdoor temperature and weather conditions using a specialized instrument called a Wet Bulb Globe Temperature thermometer. The readings are combined into an index called the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature Index (WBGT). This index is not the same as the heat index given on the UNH weather station page or the national weather service. The WBGT as measured outdoors is not applicable to the conditions inside of buildings; when using this method indoor measurements are indexed differently than outdoor measurements.

UNH uses the WBGT index because this value can be compared to a recognized standard for heat stress. When the outdoor WBGT exceeds any of the thresholds in the heat stress standard for individuals performing moderate or heavy duty physical activity, the University issues a heat alert.

What are supervisors, program managers, and others overseeing outdoor activities required to do when a heat alert is issued?

Wherever possible, outdoor activity should be modified to either be inside or in a shaded area. If this is not possible, staff and others must be given additional breaks from physical activity and remain well hydrated. Departments and programs overseeing outdoor activities should provide water coolers and other hydration.
When the heat alert is issued, the notice will contain a work/rest regimen. For outdoor activity that must continue during the heat alert, staff and others must be provided rest according to that given in the alert.

**What does a work/rest regimen mean? What does it mean to work 25% with 75% rest?**

The work/rest regimen describes the amount of physical activity an outdoor worker carrying out moderate or heavy duty tasks should perform in a given hour, and the amount of rest that person should be allotted in a given hour. For example, if a heat alert states that a 25% work 75% rest regimen is in effect, then workers will perform physical tasks for 15 minutes followed by 45 minutes of rest.

**Does the heat alert affect faculty, staff and students indoors where there is no air conditioning?**

For staff and others active in areas without air conditioning, the temperature and humidity in individual locations will vary as will individual tolerances for heat. In hot, humid weather supervisors are encouraged to use best judgment of their work environment and to exercise any and all discretion as permitted by UNH policy. This may include allowing for additional breaks, scheduling physical work activities for the coolest part of the day, providing fans, and/or offering water or other hydration. Supervisors of office staff may consider relocation to an air-conditioned area if available, such as Dimond Library, permitting staff to work from home if practical, or staff may simply be released for the remainder of the day.