

Department of Environment, Parks and Water
Security

Managing heat during response

A national issue, an agency responsibility



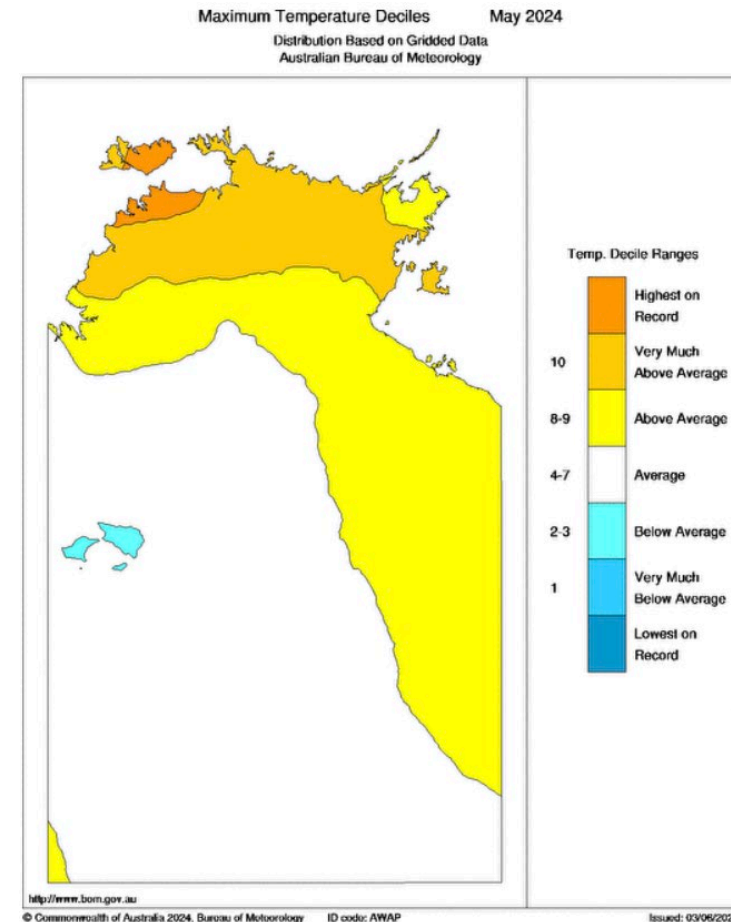
Acknowledging the risk

- Acknowledgement of heat related illness occurring due to mitigation and response activities
- Listed as the top WHS risk for the agency
- Needed to know more about the impacts and management options

Source: <https://www.weatherzone.com.au/news/darwins-hottest-may-in-over-a-century/1889485>

JOEL PIPPARD, 03 JUN 2024, 4:01 PM ACST

Darwin's hottest May in over a century



Understanding the risk

- Information sessions with Dr Matt Brearley – Thermal Hyperperformance
 - All staff forum
 - Annual captains meeting
 - DEPWS

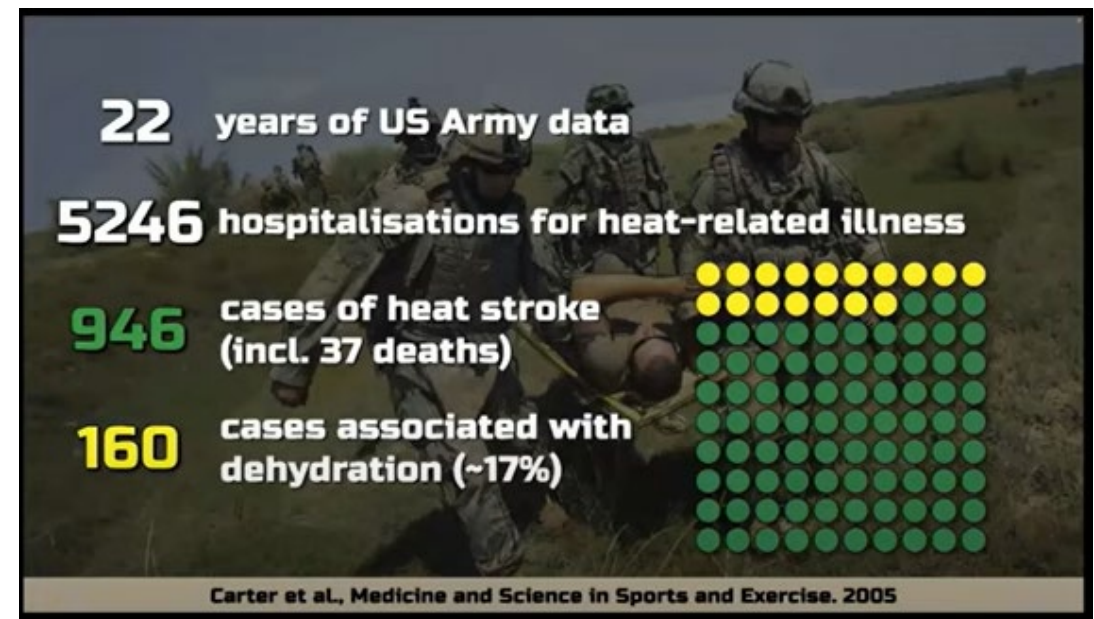
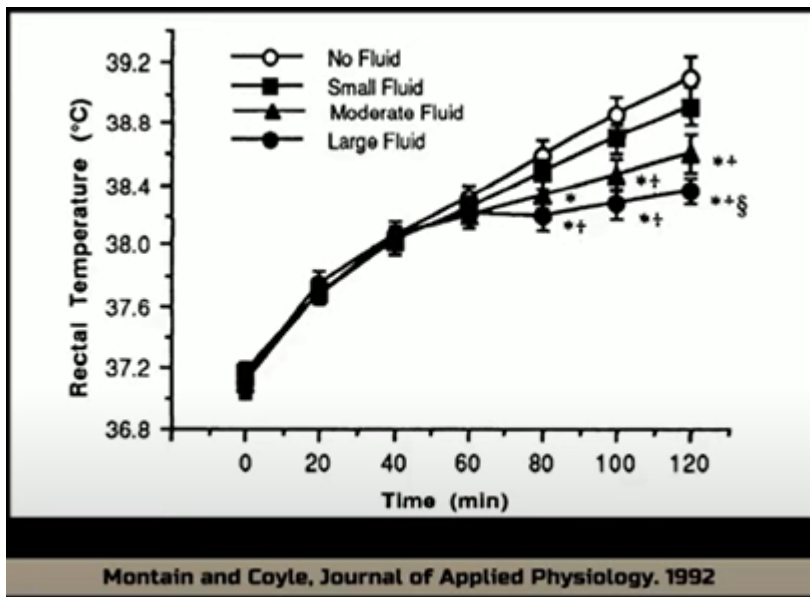


THERMAL
HYPERFORMANCE

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8XTIMcL8mo

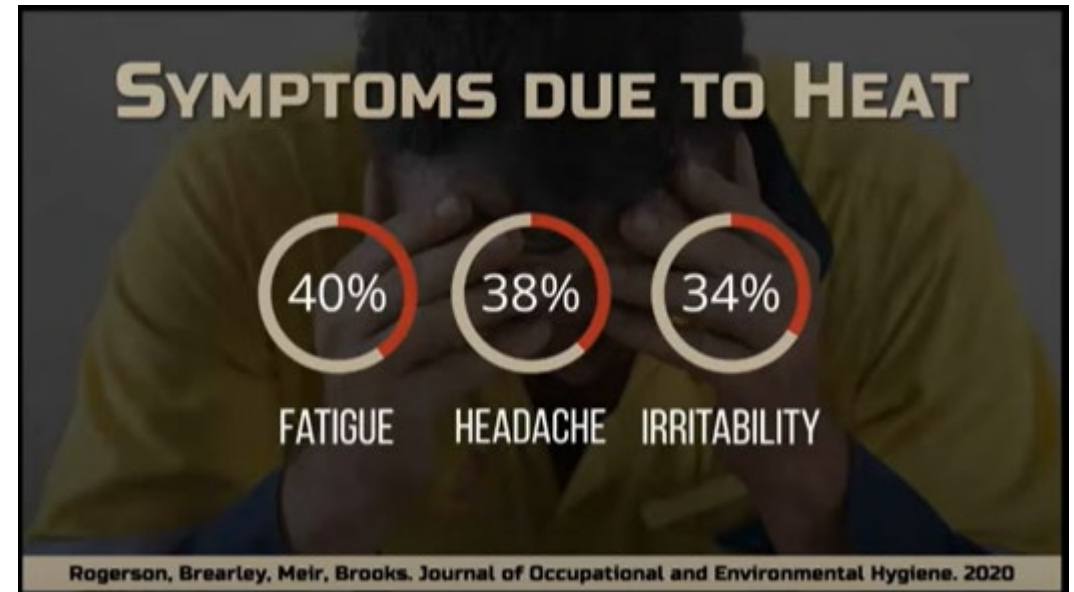
Understanding the risk

- Hydration important, but not the only issue
- US Army case study



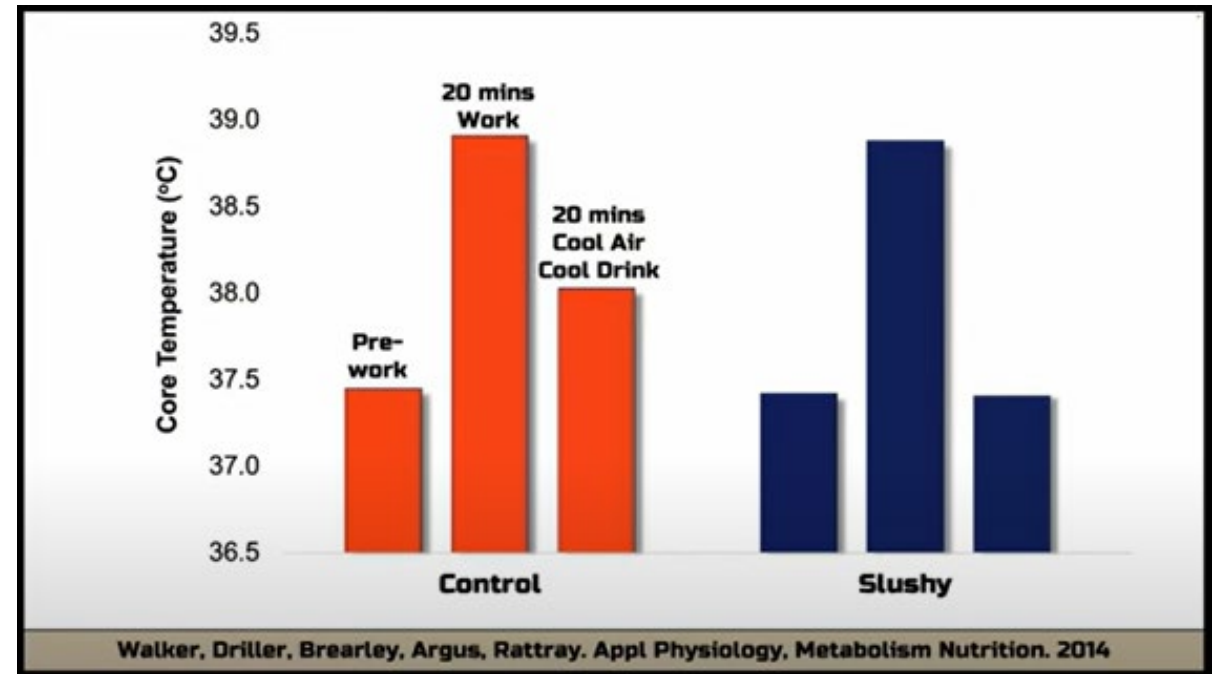
Understanding the risk

- Heat hangover
- Cumulative heat
 - Considered the biggest issues for workers in the NT
- Changes to the ANZCOR guidelines in 2020 for treatment of heat stroke
 - Guideline 9.3.4
 - Methods for cooling patients now include submersion



Understanding the risk

- Cooling core body temperature
- Effects of slushies vs cool drinks



Actions taken

- Awareness sessions
- Water and cool drinks
- Zooper Doopers
- Slushy machines
- Cooling towels
- Changing perceptions and thinking



Challenges in 2023 season

- Central Australia had a fire season
 - First big season since 2011/12
- Season overlapped with Top End response
- Crews already suffering from cumulative heat and fatigue
- Change in fire response
 - Short fires, 1-2 days to campaign events
- Working in remote areas
- Working at increasing distances from staging to fire grounds
- Restricted access to cooling and hydration consumables

Future considerations

- Restrictions on workforce expansion
- Climate change
- PPE options