

## Hydrated or Hospitalized: The Thin Line in Summer Conditions

On hot job sites, especially in high-stakes linework, staying hydrated isn't just a recommendation, it's a critical safety measure. Linemen who neglect hydration face real and immediate consequences: reduced focus, slower reaction times, fatigue, dizziness, irritability, and, eventually, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. These conditions don't just threaten individual health—they put entire crews at risk. Operating heavy equipment or working around high voltage while dehydrated, with a lack of focus and precision, can lead to mistakes that result in injury or fatality. Even short-term lapses in fluid intake can snowball into serious medical emergencies, sidelining workers and halting operations.

Many assume drinking water is enough, but under prolonged heat and physical exertion, the body loses more than just fluids—it loses electrolytes like sodium, potassium, and magnesium. Electrolytes are key to our body's function as they conduct electrical charges, helping muscles contract. Without replacing these, linemen risk cramping, confusion, and a drop in muscle function. Muscle cramps aren't just annoying; they're the body's distress signal that it's losing the chemical balance it needs to function. Ignoring these signs or "pushing through it" doesn't make a lineman tough—it puts them in danger. Heat illness, left untreated, can cause long-term damage to organs, mental function, and career longevity. True toughness is knowing when to take action, hydrate properly, and watch out for your team.

To stay properly hydrated, linemen should aim to drink 8-10 ounces of water every 20-30 minutes while working, especially in the heat. Hydration doesn't stop when the workday ends—it's crucial to hydrate before the shift and continue replenishing fluids afterward. In addition to water, adding electrolyte powders is a convenient and effective way to maintain hydration.

