



Response to The Guardian newspaper

Monday, 30 September 2019

Aside from the 11.30am-3pm work ban, how is the Supreme Committee keeping workers safe from heat stress during the summer months?

The SC's main contractors are required to put in place a comprehensive heat stress management plan that is reviewed and approved by the SC. The aim of the plan is to ensure that the risk of heat stress is reduced by having systems in place to educate site personnel on the signs, symptoms and environmental conditions relating to heat stress and to inform site personnel of temperatures/humidity and action to be taken.

This procedure identifies fundamental practices and methods of identification of factors that could lead to heat stress and the associated illnesses and provides work practices and other controls that can mitigate or reduce the hazards.

The main objectives of the heat stress managements plans are:

- Protecting all working persons from excessive exposure to the sun while exercising their normal duties
- Preventing injury and suffering from the effects of heat stress to personnel
- Providing guidelines and regulations to manage heat, throughout the project
- Addressing and provide mitigation measures to prevent any negative impact on our employees due to working in the sun
- Complying with local legislation

The SC audits each contractor against their plan throughout the period of high temperatures to ensure the contractor is working to the agreed plan. This is followed up with formal audits and regular monitoring.

In addition, all contractors are required to submit temperature and humidity readings to the relevant SC department during the summer period for review. Spot checks are carried out by the SC and our construction supervision consultants against the numerous weather stations across our sites. If a contractor has not stopped work when required, the SC's Technical Delivery Office (TDO) instructs the contractor to immediately shut-down the site and take suitable action with the contractor depending upon the individual circumstances. The readings taken on site using this system identify where work patterns need to be altered or if work must be suspended.

In carrying out its responsibility under the SC Workers' Welfare Standards (WWS) four tier audit system, it's important to highlight that the Ministry of Administrative Development Labor & Social Affairs (MoADLSA) also carries out unannounced visits that complement the SC's inspections to ensure compliance with the summer work ban hour period specifically.



In addition to the SC's heat stress management systems, we have also utilised a range of cooling products to enhance workers' safety and welfare during Qatar's summer months. In 2017 we distributed 10,000 cooling towels to workers, followed by 3,500 cooling vests in 2018. Both of these initiatives were pilots designed to find innovative solutions to enhance health and safety.

In March 2018, a collaboration with UK-based apparel experts [TechNiche](#) and a local university, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) was forged which led to the development of a bespoke cooling workwear range, designed to reduce thermal body temperatures by up to 15°C. The SC began a phased deployment of these revolutionary suits to 30,000 SC workers in June 2019.

Furthermore, in July 2019, the SC collaborated with MoDLA, the International Labor Organisation (ILO) and climate academics [FAME Lab](#), to assess the impact of workplace heat stress on workers.

The [study](#) examined working conditions on Al Rayyan Stadium, where 4,000 SC workers are currently operating under a comprehensive heat stress management plan mandated by the SC. The second project involved a non-SC project involving 40 workers employed on a small farm with minimal heat stress prevention measures.

Covering different shifts, nationalities and ages, 125 workers were monitored across 5,000 work hours. The research tested heat mitigation strategies against work-to-rest ratios, workwear solutions and hydration habits of workers.

The experts leading the study highlighted the effectiveness of existing heat stress management systems, primarily on-site cooling rooms and increased focus on regular hydration, cooling workwear, and, critically, empowering workers to communicate with supervisors and take regular breaks. A full report on this study will be issued in due course.

The findings will further enhance our existing heat stress management plans, inform future strategies and create a lasting legacy beyond 2022.

Will the Supreme Committee investigate the high numbers of migrant workers dying of cardiac arrests or "natural causes" while working in Qatar?

The SC investigates all non-work-related deaths and work-related fatalities in line with our Incident Investigation Procedure to identify contributory factors and establish how they could have been prevented. This process involves evidence collection and analysis and witness interviews to establish the facts of the incident. While this is standard SC procedure, the responsibility to investigate the underlying causes of death in the case of non-work lies with the relevant local authorities.

There have been 23 non-work-related deaths recorded on our programme since construction began in 2014, of which three were Nepalese guest workers with the most recent death occurring in June 2019.



The SC regularly discloses all work related and non-work-related deaths in its annual progress reports (see attached).

The SC is acutely aware of the emerging pattern of non-work related deaths, and as a result, in 2018 we signed a Cooperation Agreement with Qatar Red Crescent (QRC) to carry out comprehensive medical examinations on all SC workers. All new workers are mandated to undergo these health screenings within one year of deployment on SC projects, as per the SC [WWS](#) while existing workers are expected to do them manually.

Many workers mobilise to Qatar without receiving a comprehensive medical examination in their countries of origin and in other cases they may not have done so while working in Qatar for quite some time. We are addressing this through our partnership with QRC, conducting almost 19,000 comprehensive medical screenings to date.

Furthermore, in February 2018 the SC partnered with [The Phoenix Partnership](#) to introduce electronic medical records on our programme – a first-of-its-kind healthcare initiative on a major construction programme in the region. Over 29,000 workers have registered since, enabling more efficient healthcare data management. These initiatives have helped identify and treat at risk workers, thus reducing health issues on the programme at large.

Additionally, the SC partnered with the renowned [Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar](#) on a nutrition programme aimed at improving nutrition through enhanced menus, and raising awareness of the link between a healthy lifestyle and workplace safety. The programme, which has been running since 2017 and will continue until 2020, also identifies health issues amongst workers and addresses them through treatment plans and training and awareness for workers and contractors' staff. 'Hot-spot' stations were established within [Hamad Medical Corporation](#) for workers requiring immediate treatment, which have been highly successful in managing workers' health issues.

Can you confirm the cause of death of Mr Rup Chandra Rumba?

The SC can confirm that Rup Chandra Rumba, a Nepalese national, died on 23 June 2019 in his accommodation. The cause of death was acute cardio-respiratory failure, due to natural causes. We send our deepest condolences to Mr. Rumba's family.

Mr. Rumba worked for Maskey Contracting, a sub-contractor that was not pre-approved to mobilise on the SC site - a violation of the SC WWS by the main contractor. The company deployed five workers from the period April to July 2019. Due to the non-approved status, neither Mr. Rumba nor his colleagues received nor planned to receive a comprehensive medical screening. The SC is currently undertaking a full investigation into the circumstances of the lapse of the pre-approval process.



Will the Supreme Committee arrange compensation for the wife and son of Rupchandra Rumba?

The SC has followed up with the employers of Mr Rumba, Maskey Contracting and have been assured and presented with documentation to confirm, that they have settled all outstanding compensation that was due to Mr Rumba. Maskey Contracting have remained in close contact with Mr Rumba's family throughout the process. His family received the funds via the Nepalese embassy in Qatar on 3 July 2019.

Further information

- www.sc.qa/sites/default/files/docs/Workers-Welfare-Progress-Report-Apr-Dec-2015-EN.pdf
- www.sc.qa/sites/default/files/docs/Workers-Welfare-Progress-Report-2016-January-to-2017-February-EN.pdf
- www.sc.qa/sites/default/files/docs/Workers-Welfare-Progress-Report-2017-March-to-2018-January-EN.pdf
- www.sc.qa/sites/default/files/docs/4th-Annual-Workers'-Welfare-Progress-Report_EN.pdf