

GUIDELINES FOR MALAYSIAN ORGANISATIONS TO SAFELY NAVIGATE EXTREME HEAT DURING THE HAJJ SEASON

International SOS recommends that organisations encourage their workforce to take the relevant precautions in order to have a safe and healthy Hajj.

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, June 26, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Hajj pilgrimage, scheduled

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*Dr Marie Louise, Regional
Medical Director,
International SOS, Dubai*

to take place in Saudi Arabia from 26 June to 1 July, is anticipated to draw two million participants¹ including over 31,000 Malaysians. It is expected that the number of pilgrims travelling to Saudi Arabia will reach its pre-pandemic levels as restrictions on age and travel are lifted. The number of flights from Malaysia has been increased from 49 to 70 per week according to media reports². Saudi Arabia has established operational procedures to handle the increased number of travellers entering the Kingdom. As this year's Hajj season occurs during the summer, pilgrims can expect to deal with the high summer temperatures and humidity. Therefore, [International SOS](#)

recommends that organisations encourage their workforce to take the relevant precautions in order to have a safe and healthy Hajj.

Dr Marie Louise Van-Eck, Regional Medical Director at International SOS in Dubai, advises: “Our bodies are naturally designed to maintain a constant temperature of around 37°C (98.6°F). The body automatically balances heat gain and loss; however, if it is unable to effectively cool down, the inner “core” temperature can rise to dangerous levels. This leads to the breakdown of bodily systems. Anyone can be overcome by heat, even people who are fit and healthy. Certain individuals are at higher risk than others, such as young children/babies, pregnant/nursing mothers, the elderly and those with medical conditions, so keeping a close eye on these individuals is important.

The great news is that we can prevent heat-related illnesses. To combat the challenges of extreme heat during the hot season, it is important for pilgrims to maintain proper hydration by drinking plenty of water. It is advisable to avoid excessive consumption of caffeine and sugary drinks as they contribute to dehydration. Wearing suitable attire, such as loose-fitting,

lightweight, and preferably light-coloured clothing enables the body to breathe and stay cool. Pilgrims should not forget to protect their head and face with a hat or an umbrella and reapply sunscreen frequently. It is advised to take regular breaks to rest in cool shaded areas and avoid direct exposure to the sun, especially during peak hours between 10 AM- 4 PM. Pilgrims should remember to listen to their bodies and to not overexert themselves. Lastly, it is essential for pilgrims to comply with all health regulations and be mindful of prevalent diseases, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), by practising good hygiene.”

Gulnaz Ukassova, Security Director at International SOS in Dubai, said:

“Pilgrims undertaking Hajj should closely follow government directives and ensure they have obtained the correct approvals prior to departure. Utilise the services of a government-approved and trusted pilgrimage organiser that has the appropriate arrangements in place. Additionally, it is crucial for pilgrims to be aware of the challenges posed by being in crowded places during the Hajj and take necessary precautions to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Travellers visiting Saudi Arabia during this period and who are not participating in Hajj should be mindful of heightened cultural and religious sensitivities. Visitors should ensure adherence to all local legal, religious and cultural norms, comply with instructions issued by the authorities at all times and exercise caution in crowded areas. Visitors should also anticipate potential travel disruption, as well as increased demand for transport and accommodation during this period. Travellers should reconfirm their bookings and travel arrangements and allow additional time for journeys, especially if using King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED) in Jeddah (Mecca), where most pilgrims arrive.”

International SOS provides the following top advice for organisations and their workforce to ensure the health and safety of pilgrims during the hot season:

- o Encourage employees to stay hydrated to avoid heatstroke. It is important to select safer food and beverages, such as using bottled water, washing fruits and vegetables thoroughly, ensuring thorough cooking of meat and avoiding non-pasteurised dairy items.
- o Emphasise the importance of dressing appropriately by wearing loose, lightweight clothing made of natural fibres such as cotton or linen, which are cooler than synthetic materials. Advise the use of light-coloured clothes that reflect heat and recommend the use of wide-brimmed hats or umbrellas to protect against the sun.
- o Highlight the need for rest and frequent breaks in cool places. Encourage individuals to listen to their bodies and avoid overexertion in hot weather. Remind individuals to protect their skin by applying sunscreen and applying it according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- o Educate your employees about the symptoms of heat-related illnesses such as heat rash, heat cramps, heat syncope (heat collapse), heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Emphasise the importance of taking these symptoms seriously and seeking medical attention if needed.

- o Recommend the use of cool showers, baths, or sponging off with cool water to help lower body temperature and suggest the use of cool water sprays and fans to create a breeze and relieve the heat.
- o Raise awareness about high-risk groups such as young children, elderly people, pregnant or nursing mothers, and those with underlying medical conditions or on medications who may be more susceptible to heat-related illnesses. Encourage extra precautions and monitor their well-being.
- o If organisations are involved in conducting the pilgrimage, emphasise the importance of complying with instructions provided by Hajj operators. Inform individuals about the set times organised by Saudi Arabian authorities to minimise the potential for overcrowding. Advise pilgrims to be mindful of their belongings when moving through the crowds.
- o Remind individuals to pay attention to people who may appear sick, to maintain distance, wash hands frequently, and avoid touching their faces.

Instruct pilgrims to avoid direct contact with animals, including camels, due to the potential presence of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in camels and their products.

- o Advise individuals to save emergency contacts on their mobile phones and ensure their phones are charged. Recommend including important contacts such as police, ambulance services, embassy, and local contacts.
- o Encourage the workforce to monitor the situation and stay updated with the latest news and recommendations.

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