

# SunSmart workplaces: Construction and road work

*Small changes can make a big difference on site.*

In industries like construction and road work, workers often spend long hours outdoors, placing them among those most exposed to the sun. Outdoor workers - people who perform paid or unpaid duties outside as part of their role - are regularly exposed to hazards such as ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Over time, this repeated exposure significantly increases the risk of developing skin cancer.

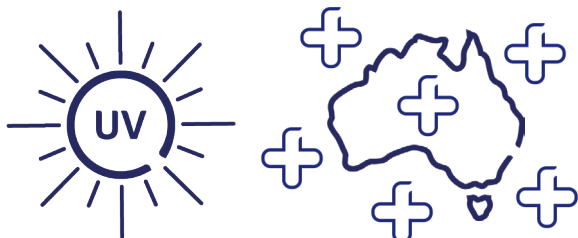
Under work health and safety laws, employers, including in construction, have a **legal responsibility** to provide a safe workplace and to eliminate or minimise health risks. UV radiation exposure is a foreseeable and preventable workplace hazard - just like any other safety risk on site.

The good news is that small, practical changes in how work is planned and managed can make a big difference in reducing UV exposure.



## Why sun safety at work matters

Exposure to UV radiation is a leading cause of skin cancer in Australia.



Every year in Australia it's estimated that over **200** melanomas and **34,000** other skin cancers are caused by **UV exposure in the workplace**.

Construction and road work environments increase the risk of UV exposure due to:

- long hours outdoors during peak UV times
- reflective surfaces such as polished aluminium, light coloured concrete and white house paint
- limited shade on open sites
- elevated work with no shade such as high rise structures, scaffolding and roofshot conditions resulting in workers rolling up sleeves or removing protective clothing.

It's important to remember that UV damage occurs **even on cloudy or cool days** - and the effects build up over time.



# Small changes that can keep your crew safe

While sun protection is a shared responsibility, it starts by workplaces creating a supportive environment. Simple adjustments to site practices, scheduling and equipment can protect workers.

## Plan work to reduce exposure

- ✓ **Understand your current risk level** by completing this [online assessment](#) for workplaces and identify key areas for improvement.
- ✓ **Schedule outdoor tasks earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon** where possible.
- ✓ **Rotate workers** between indoor and outdoor tasks to reduce time spent in direct sun.
- ✓ **Include sun safety in site planning and risk assessments** - there are tools to help you do this including online assessments and sun safety policy [templates](#).
- ✓ **Provide shade** for breaks and use portable shade structures, site sheds or covered areas where possible.

## Support workers to protect themselves

- ✓ **Require sun-safe PPE** - including long-sleeved hi-vis shirts, long pants, wide brim hats and UV protective sunglasses.
- ✓ **Provide SPF 50+ sunscreen** on site and encourage regular reapplication.
- ✓ **Include sun safety measures** in site inductions and toolbox talks - there are [resources](#) to help with this.



## Make sun safety part of everyday safety culture

Just like hard hats, hydration and safe machine operation practices, sun protection should be part of the daily safety routine on site. When businesses support these practices through visible leadership, policies, planning and communication, it can help protect workers and strengthen a culture of safety.

## Protect your crew for the long haul

Skin cancer is largely preventable. By building sun safety into everyday work practices, construction and road work companies can help protect crews while meeting workplace safety responsibilities.

The [SunSmart Workplaces toolkit](#) provides practical resources including policy templates, risk assessments and communication materials to help worksites reduce UV risk.

Visit [www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart-workplaces](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart-workplaces) for more tools and resources to support you.

