

Toolbox talk: SunSmart at work

These messages have been developed to share with your team the importance of sun safety at work. You may wish to share them at a staff meeting or during a planned safety talk.

Key messages

- When we work outdoors, even some of the time, we have an increased risk of skin cancer.
- This is because we're exposed to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation which is the major cause of skin cancer, including melanoma. UV exposure can also cause eye damage and premature ageing.
- It's important to use sun safe protection all year round. Because even when it's cloudy, we're at risk of harm from UV.
- The good news is that skin cancer is the most preventable cancer.
- Everyone plays a part in making sure we're sun safe at work.
- Simple things like staying out of the sun in the middle parts of the day where possible, and taking breaks in the shade, are important.
- We need to be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) like a long-sleeved shirt with a collar and long pants, a broad-brimmed hat or a hard hat attachment, sunscreen and sunglasses, or safety glasses that meet the Australian Standard.
- Take the online sun safety quiz to test your knowledge of sun safety
<https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/sunsmart-workplaces/quiz/>
- Check your skin regularly and if you notice new or changing spots, see your GP immediately.

Why sun safety matters

- More than 2,200 Australians die from skin cancers every year, nearly double the national road toll.
- The average Australian will spend almost a third of their life at work, which means sun exposure during this time is a pretty serious issue.
- Because we work outdoors, we're exposed to a lot of UV at work. Outdoor workers like us can get up to 10 times more UV exposure than indoor workers.



- UV radiation also causes serious damage to our eyes, as well as dryness, wrinkling and premature ageing of our skin.
- The good news is that most skin cancers can be prevented.
- By identifying appropriate and sustainable ways to support sun protection across the whole workplace, we can protect ourselves and each other.

Risk factors

Ask: ‘When is there greater risk of skin cancer?’

- When the UV is higher, we’re at greater risk. To find out what the UV level is, check with the Bureau of Meteorology or the free [SunSmart Global UV app](#).
- Almost all (95 per cent) skin cancers are caused by UV damage. Anyone can get skin cancer, but our risk is higher if we:
 - work outdoors
 - have fair skin that burns easily
 - have many moles on your skin
 - have a history of bad sunburn
 - have had a skin cancer already or have a family history of skin cancer
 - spend a lot of time outdoors, unprotected
 - suntan, use/have used solariums
- We should use sun protection every day to stop UV damage from adding up over time.
- Even if we’ve worked in the sun for years, it’s not too late to become sun safe.

Responsibilities

‘What are the laws and my responsibilities at work?’

- UV radiation is a known cause of workplace injury and disease.
- In meeting health and safety requirements, all workplaces with outdoor workers should address UV radiation as a workplace hazard and develop and implement control measures (including PPE) to ensure that workers are protected.
- You have a responsibility to take care of your own health and safety when working outdoors. This includes complying with health and safety policies in relation to UV protection.
- You should also look out for your mates and colleagues. If you can see a risk of sun and UV exposure at work, call it out.
- We all want to enjoy life outside of work, so don’t let what you do at work compromise

that. Reduce the risk and return home safely to your family.

Reduce the risk

Ask: 'How could you reduce your exposure to UV radiation while working outdoors?'

To reduce risk wherever possible, you can:

- work under shade—trees, or portable and permanent shade structures
- move the job indoors
- plan work so that outdoor tasks are scheduled earlier in the morning or later in the day
- take breaks indoors or in the shade
- use sun-protective PPE
- move away from or modify reflective surfaces such as water, concrete, sand, glass, roofing iron, and snow
- make sure vehicles have tinted windows.

Personal protective equipment (PPE):



Slip on a long-sleeved shirt with a collar and trousers ideally made from material with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of 50+.



Slop on broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen and lip balm with a sun protection factor (SPF) 50+. Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going out in the sun and reapply every two hours.



Slap on a hat that shades the face, head, ears and neck. It should be broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style (caps do not protect your neck and ears). Wear attachable brims and neck flaps when wearing a hard hat.



Seek shade, particularly when you take breaks.



Slide on wrap-around sunglasses that are close fitting and that meet the AS 1067.1:2016 Australian/New Zealand Standard – category 2, 3 or 4 or safety glasses that meet AS/NZS 1337.1.