

Work environment – **Outdoor environment**

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Protection from the sun >

This information bulletin contains information about solar UV radiation and how outdoor workers can reduce their risk of injury from this hazard.

Legislation

Regulation 58(c) of the [Workplace Health and Safety Regulations](#) states that where a worker is exposed to radiation, such that there is a risk to the health and safety of the worker, an employer shall ensure that measures are taken to protect the health and safety of the worker.

Introduction

The Northern Territory's closeness to the equator means that many of our outdoor workers face a high risk of developing skin cancer through overexposure to ultraviolet radiation. It is estimated that at least two out of three Territorians will develop some form of skin cancer during their lives. (Barr. J., 1996. NT Construction Industry Sun Smart Site Project. Cancer Council of the NT. Darwin. p1).

Identify the hazard

When assessing the workplace, consider:

- Which body surfaces are exposed to sunlight;
- Lack of shade in outdoor work areas;
- How long the job will take;
- When the peak sun hours are (usually between 10am and 4pm);
- The presence of any reflective surfaces such as water, shiny metal roofing, white painted walls and cement surfaces;
- Whether any photosensitising chemicals or plants are present;
- Whether sun blockout is provided and used; and
- Whether protective clothing is available and worn.

Assess the risk

- Check whether shade is available for outdoor jobs;
- Identify which jobs are done during peak sun hours;
- Calculate how long workers will be exposed to peak sun hours;
- Check whether protective clothing such as broad-brimmed hats, long sleeved shirts and long pants are available and worn;

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- Check that the sunscreen (of at least 15+ strength) is available and applied to all exposed skin areas; and
- Check that the sunscreen is reapplied regularly as per the directions on the container.

Control the risk

Adopt a UV radiation management policy (contact the [Cancer Council of the NT](#) for examples) which includes:

- Whenever possible, schedule work to avoid working in direct sunlight during peak sun hours;
- If possible, share the outdoor work amongst workers so that the same workers are not always out in the sun;
- Make use of shaded work areas whenever possible;
- Erect shade structures to work under or rest out of the sun when taking a break – beach umbrellas, canopies, tents, caravans, sheds;
- Wear loose, cool protective clothing such as a broad brimmed hat (at least 10cm wide), shirt with collar and long sleeves, and long trousers. Ideally, the fabric will be closely woven to reduce the penetration of sunlight through it. Hard hats can be fitted with an attachable brim.
- If shorts must be worn, choose knee length ones;
- Apply sun screen (of at least 15+ strength) 20 minutes before heading into the sun and then regularly reapply to exposed body areas including nose, lips, ears, bald heads, necks and backs of hands. Apply more often if sweating heavily;
- To avoid lip cancer, wear a lipscreen which incorporates a sun screen;
- Wear wrap around sunglasses that conform to Australian Standard [AS1067](#) to protect against the development of cataracts and other eye diseases;
- If wearing safety glasses, ensure they conform to Australian Standard [AS1337](#).
- Aim to increase employee awareness of skin cancer, in particular how it is caused and how to recognise the early signs of it through education sessions and the provision of information pamphlets available from the NT Cancer Council;
- Encourage management, staff and supervisors to be excellent role models to workers; and
- Provide signage at strategic locations to remind people about sun protection.

Remember, even when it is cool and cloudy, workers are still at risk from ultraviolet radiation.

For information concerning skin cancer, contact the Cancer Council of the NT on 8927 4888.

NT WorkSafe >

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