

Sun Safety for Outdoor Workers

Many workers spend more time outdoors than indoors while on the job. While many will stop to think about heat-related injuries such as heat stroke or dehydration, many will not even think twice about how often they get a sunburn when working outside.

Sunburns, skin cancers and other sun-related health effects are largely preventable when sun protection is practiced early and consistently. Despite the fact that tanning and burning increase skin cancer risks, most Americans do not protect themselves from the sun's damaging rays. Besides skin cancer, people are at risk for eye damage, extensive wrinkling and even immune system suppression. The best protection is provided when all the sun-safe behaviors are practiced together. Good sun protection habits include:

- **Limiting sun exposure during the hours when the sun is the strongest (10 AM – 4 PM).** Your shadow is a good indicator of the sun's intensity. If your shadow is shorter than you are, then the sun is at its highest intensity. **NO SHADOW=SEEK SHADE.**
- **Referring to the daily UV index when working outdoors.** The UV Index is a daily forecast of the intensity of the sun's rays and indicates the risk of overexposure to skin-damaging UV radiation.
- **Seeking shade whenever possible.** Shade structures such as trees and umbrellas provide year round protection. If shade is not available, try to limit the total amount of time spent outside in the sun.
- **Wearing a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, long pants and long-sleeved tightly woven clothing.** Clothing can physically block out the sun's harmful rays and should be the first line of defense against sun exposure. Sunglasses should block out 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation to protect the eyes from damage. Hats are the best way to minimize UV exposure to the face, head, ears and neck.
- **Using broad-spectrum sunscreens whose active ingredients block UVA and UVB rays.** The Sun Protective Factor (SPF) should be no lower than 15. Sunscreens should be worn every day, including cloudy days. They should be applied liberally and evenly before going out into the sun and should be reapplied every two hours regardless of the SPF level, in order to maintain their protection level.
- **Limiting exposure to reflective surfaces like snow and water.** UV rays can be reflected off of sand, tile, water, snow and buildings. It is important to practice all protective behaviors even when you are in the shade.
- **Keep hydrated.** The hot sun drains the body of fluids. It is important to drink plenty of water and try to complement this intake with sports drinks containing electrolytes. However, do not consume large quantities of sports drinks as this has been linked with several deaths—especially in hot weather.

Sun Safety for Outdoor Workers Quiz

The following statements should be answered with "True" or "False." Answers below.

1. The sun is strongest between 10 AM and 4 PM.
2. Tightly woven clothing will help protect against sun exposure.
3. Sunglasses should block out 100% of UVA and UVB radiation.
4. UV rays can reflect off sand, water, snow and buildings.
5. Sunscreen should only be worn if you burn easily.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Answers:

1. True
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. False