Be SunSmart

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. SunSmart recommends outdoor workers take a five-step approach to protect their skin each day and reduce their risk of skin cancer.

There's more to sun protection than sunscreen. Protect yourself in five ways:

Seek shade

Slip on sun-protective clothing

Slap on a broad-brimmed hat

Slide on wrap-around sunglasses

Slop on SPF30 or higher broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen

Cancer Council Victoria’s SunSmart program can assist your workplace with sun protection policy support, education and resources to help create a safe working environment.

If your job requires you to work outside, tax deductions are available for sun protection products. Talk to your tax advisor or contact the Australian Tax Office on 13 28 61 or at ato.gov.au

Use the free SunSmart app for smartphones and tablets to find out how much sunscreen to apply and set reminders to re-apply your application every two hours. Find out more at sunsmart.com.au/app

Be SunSmart in Australia with the free SunSmart app

For more information visit sunsmart.com.au/work

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Skin cancer prevention for outdoor workers

The sun’s ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the major cause of skin cancer. Australia experiences some of the highest levels of UV radiation in the world. On a fine summer day in Victoria, for example, UV levels can be high enough to damage some skin types in as little as 11 minutes.

As an outdoor worker, you receive five to 10 times more UV radiation exposure than indoor workers, putting you at a higher risk of skin cancer, including melanoma. All skin types can be damaged by UV radiation. Damage is irreversible and will keep adding up every time your skin is overexposed to UV without sun protection.

Think UV, not heat!

UV radiation isn’t like the sun’s warmth, which we feel, or the sun’s light, which we see. Because our senses can’t detect UV, it can damage our skin without us realising. Don’t be fooled by temperature – UV levels can be just as high on a cool or cloudy day, as a scorching hot one.

If you’re spending extended periods of time outdoors, sun protection is recommended year-round.

Protect your skin at work

SunSmart recommends outdoor workers follow these five simple steps to cut their risk of skin cancer:

Seek shade

• Work and take breaks in the shade. Where no shade exists, use temporary portable shade.
• Plan to work indoors or in the shade during the middle of the day when UV levels are strongest.
• Share outdoor tasks and rotate staff so the same person is not always out in the sun.

Slip on clothing that covers as much skin as possible

• Long pants and collared, long-sleeved shirts are best.
• Choose loose-fitting, lightweight, closely-woven material with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of 50+.

Slap on a hat which shades your face, ears and neck

• Wear a broad-brimmed, bucket-style or legionnaire hat.
• If wearing a hard hat or helmet, use a brim or legionnaire-style attachment to provide protection.
• Baseball caps are not recommended, as they only provide partial protection for your face and will not shade your neck or ears.

Slide on close-fitting, wrap-around style sunglasses

• When choosing eyewear, look at the swing tag to ensure they meet the Australian Standard – AS/NZS 1067:2003 for sunglasses or AS/NZS 1337:1992 for safety glasses.

Slop on SPF30 or higher, broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen

• Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outdoors and re-apply at least every two hours.
• There are sunscreens available that are specifically for outdoor workers that will not leave marks on equipment. Try different formulas and find one that works for you.

Check for skin cancer

It is important that you become familiar with your skin and what your skin looks like normally, so changes will be noticed quickly. Skin cancer can spread fast, but is much easier to treat if it is caught early. Check all of your skin, not just the areas that are regularly exposed to the sun. If you notice anything unusual, including any change in shape, colour or size of a spot, or the development of a spot, visit your doctor as soon as possible.

A workplace sun protection policy

Victorian work health and safety legislation requires your employer to provide a safe working environment. This legislation also requires, that as a worker you must co-operate with your employer’s efforts to make the workplace safe, for example, by following any instructions for sun protection. If you work outdoors and your workplace does not offer any sun protection measures, raise this with your manager or health and safety representative.