

UV protection for construction industry workers

This document provides construction industry workers and employers with information about their UV safety responsibilities and how to stay safe when working outdoors.

Construction industry workers in Australia receive up to 10 times more UV exposure than indoor workers, placing them at an increased risk of skin and eye damage and skin cancer. Because UV damage adds up, people who work outdoors need year-round sun protection.

Employers must protect all workers – including casual and contracted employees – from ultraviolet (UV) radiation damage.

All skin types can be damaged by overexposure to the sun's UV rays. Damage is permanent, irreversible and adds up with each exposure to increase the risk of skin cancer.

Exposure to UV at work

Exposure to UV occurs by direct sun exposure, as well as via reflective surfaces and scattering of UV through the atmosphere.

It is estimated that 200 melanomas and 34,000 basal cell and squamous cell carcinoma skin cancers diagnosed each year in Australia are due to exposure to UV radiation in the workplace.

A total of 1,970 workers' compensation claims for sun-related injury/ disease were made in Australia between 2000 and 2012, at a total cost of \$63 million in compensation payments.

Protecting workers

Construction industry workers require year-round sun protection to reduce their cumulative UV exposure and skin cancer risk.

Workplaces with construction industry workers should:

- develop a UV protection policy or written guidelines documenting risk control measures.

- review, update and communicate changes to UV protection policy and procedures;
- provide information, instruction and training about UV radiation to workers;
- provide UV protection control measures in line with occupational hazard controls:
 - shade
 - modifying reflective surfaces
 - rescheduling outdoor work programs
 - providing personal protective equipment (broad-brimmed hats, sunglasses and SPF30 or higher, broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen) and sun-protective clothing

Tax deductions are available for sun-protection products if you are required to work outside. Talk to your tax advisor or contact the Australian Taxation Office on 13 28 61 or visit ato.gov.au.

SunSmart UV safety training

SunSmart offers training on the hazards of UV exposure, sun protection in the workplace and early detection of skin cancer for workers and/or for OHS representatives and management. These sessions help workplaces meet their health and safety obligations. To book a training session, contact SunSmart.

For more information and resources or to book a training session contact SunSmart on (03) 9514 6419 or visit sunsmart.com.au/work.

This information is based on current available evidence at the time of review. It can be photocopied for distribution.
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