

SunSmart Strategies for the Workplace

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the UK and the incidence of the disease is rising rapidly. However, up to 80% of cases could be avoided. Overexposure to UV radiation is the major environmental cause of all types of skin cancer. Staying safe in the UK is more important than many people think. Using SunSmart strategies in the workplace will help protect workers from the harmful effects of the sun.

On average, people who work outdoors receive 3 to 4 times more UV exposure each year than

people who work indoors. This cumulative exposure puts outdoor workers at greater risk of non-melanoma skin cancers, which are the most common forms of skin cancer in the UK. People who get sunburnt also increase their risk of malignant melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer.

Sunburn can double an individual's risk of skin cancer. Those most at risk of skin cancer are people with fair skin, lots of freckles or moles, or a family history of skin cancer.

Staying Safe in the Summer Sun

Some of the following suggestions may help your workplace be more SunSmart:

1. Make provisions for workers to avoid sun exposure at times between 11am-3pm. This is the time of day when UV radiation is at its peak in the UK, even if it is overcast.

- Structure outdoor tasks so that work can be done earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon, reserving indoor or sheltered jobs for peak UV radiation times in the middle of the day.
- Rotate staff on different tasks to limit each employee's midday sun exposure where possible.
- Provide shade (e.g. awnings, canopies) for workers to use, especially during breaks. If this is not feasible, encourage workers to find shade under trees, buildings and other temporary shelter.

2. Encourage workers to cover up.

- Provide hats or appropriate headgear for workers to wear. Hats should ideally shade the face, neck, ears and head.
- If hardhats are worn, consider providing extension flaps to protect the neck.
- If your organisation has a uniform, this could include a hat, as well as a shirt and long trousers.

3. Consider providing sunscreen.

- **If practical** for your workplace, you could provide SPF 15+ sunscreen for outdoor workers to use.
- Keep it in easily accessible places, such as tearooms, bathrooms or site offices.
- For maximum benefit, sunscreen needs to be applied generously and reapplied often.

4. Keep your workers informed.

- Include sun protection advice in routine Health and Safety training.
- Encourage workers to check their skin regularly for unusual spots or moles that change size, shape or colour and to consult their GP promptly if they find anything that causes them concern. Early detection saves lives.
- Display SunSmart's 'Skin cancer kills' resources in a prominent position.

Find out more at
www.sunsmart.org.uk

SunSmart

CANCER RESEARCH UK

