DID YOU KNOW? **Heat or high temperatures are not related to UVR levels. You can get sunburned on a cool or cloudy day, which makes the New Zealand outdoor environment particularly challenging.**
Why you need to read this booklet

This booklet provides information and advice on understanding and addressing sun protection in the workplace. A comprehensive sun protection programme is described, including various sun protection measures. A sample policy to assist with the development and implementation of your programme is included.

Employees who work outdoors for all or part of the day are at increased risk of skin cancer. This is because solar ultraviolet radiation or UVR produced by the sun is a known carcinogen (something that causes cancer).

Skin cancer — including melanoma, the most serious type — is caused by too much UVR exposure. New Zealand has one of the highest rates of melanoma in the world and skin cancer is New Zealand’s most common cancer.

New Zealand is a challenging environment for sun protection because even on cool or cloudy days, the UVR levels in New Zealand can be strong enough to damage skin.

All skin types can be damaged by exposure to UVR. Damage is permanent and irreversible and increases with each exposure. Damage can also be caused to the eyes.

Developing and implementing an effective sun protection programme is not difficult. A range of simple protective measures will help reduce the risk of sun-related injuries and reduce the suffering and costs associated with skin cancer. There are also potential benefits in terms of increased productivity (eg, less time off work due to sunburn) and financial returns. Having protective measures is also important to reduce a potential hazard.

People especially at risk include:

- agricultural, farming and horticultural workers
- building and construction workers
- council workers
- dockyard, port and harbour workers
- fisheries workers
- forestry and logging workers
- labour hire company workers
- landscape and gardening workers
- mining and earth resources workers
- outdoor events workers
- physical education teachers and outdoor sports coaches
- police and traffic officers
- postal workers
- road workers
- ski instructors and lift operators
- surveyors
- swimming pool and beach lifeguards
- taxi, bus and truck drivers and delivery and courier service workers
- telecommunications and utilities workers.
Protecting your workers

The law says you must take all practicable steps to protect your employees’ health and safety (Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992). If you have employees working outdoors, this means you must protect them from injury by the sun.

When it comes to health and safety in the workplace, prevention is far better than cure. Employers should identify UVR exposure hazards and take measures to reduce them, in consultation with health and safety representatives and employees.

Workplaces should have a comprehensive sun protection programme in place that includes:

- risk assessment/hazard identification
- sun protection control measures
- safety in the sun training
- monitoring
- a workplace sun protection policy.

Excess sun exposure is the cause of over 90 percent of skin cancers. Both melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers can appear anywhere on the body, not necessarily on the most sun-exposed areas.

DID YOU KNOW? Fifteen percent of New Zealand’s workforce work outdoors.
Risk assessment

Risk assessment can be used to identify:

- employees who have a high level of exposure to UVR
- individuals at greatest risk of harm from exposure to UVR (especially workers with fair skin and those with a previous history of skin cancer)
- work situations where high exposure to UVR occurs.

Total exposure to solar UVR during outdoor jobs depends on factors such as the:

- geographical location of the job
- time of year and time of day
- pattern and length of exposure
- availability and use of control measures
- presence of reflective surfaces (eg, concrete, metal or water) which intensify UVR.

DID YOU KNOW? You cannot feel yourself getting sunburned. UVR cannot be seen and its effects can only be experienced after the damage has occurred so it can damage your skin without you knowing.
Sun protection control measures

Once the risk has been assessed, work with your employees to make the changes needed to minimise hazardous exposure to UVR. Sun protection measures include the following.

- **Provide workers with protective gear such as:**
  - hats that shade the neck, face and ears (including a brim and neck protection attachment for hard hats)
  - protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts with collars and long trousers
  - broad spectrum, SPF30+ sunscreen
  - wrap-around sunglasses or UVR protective goggles.

- **Increase the amount of shade provided, particularly during high UVR periods.** Wherever possible carry out work in the shade, move jobs to shade areas, use portable shade structures or erect permanent shade structures. Ensure shade is available for workers to use during breaks. Using shade helps reduce daily UVR exposure levels.

- **Reschedule work where possible.** Try to reschedule outdoor work out of peak sunshine hours. UVR levels vary in strength daily and throughout the year. The peak UVR period occurs between the start of September and the end of March, especially between 11am and 4pm. Because of prolonged exposure periods, outdoors workers (particularly those with fair skin) should cover up for most of the day during these months.

- **Rotate work patterns where possible.** Share outdoor tasks and rotate staff so the same person is not always out in the sun.

- **Provide information and training on sun safety.** The law says workers must co-operate with measures to keep them safe and healthy at work. This means that you must take all practicable steps to ensure your employees use the sun protection equipment that you provide.
Encourage your workers to follow the Cancer Society of New Zealand’s five simple steps to protect themselves from sun damage.

1. **Slip into some shade**
   Reduce your exposure to the sun by working in shaded areas and, whenever possible, take breaks in the shade.

2. **Slip on sun-protective clothing**
   Choose long pants and a long-sleeved, collared shirt.

3. **Slap on a hat**
   Wear a hat that protects your head, face, neck and ears. Choose a hat with a broad brim (at least 7.5cm) or a bucket-style hat. Use a brim attachment with a neck flap with a hard hat or helmet.

4. **Slop sunscreen on all exposed skin**
   Choose broad spectrum, SPF30+ sunscreen. Apply at least 15 minutes before going outside. Reapply at least every two hours.

5. **Wrap on some sunglasses**
Safety in the sun training

Raising awareness and providing training to health and safety representatives, supervisors, outdoor employees and new staff is essential to the success of a workplace sun protection programme. Topics to be covered in any training programme should include:

- harmful health effects of excessive sun exposure
- environmental and individual risk factors for skin cancer
- factors affecting levels of UVR
- correct application and use of sun protection measures
- how to check for skin cancer
- what to look for when checking for skin cancer
- what to do if concerned about a suspicious spot, mole or freckle.
Monitoring

When sun protection measures have been implemented, they must be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. This should occur at least every two years.

**Ask yourself four simple questions.**

- Am I doing enough to protect my employees from sun damage?
- Is the appropriate sun protection gear available?
- Are people using the appropriate sun protection gear?
- What more can I do to educate and inform workers about the importance of being sun safe?

Where monitoring reveals non-compliance, it should be managed as any other non-compliance issue would be — by using your organisation’s standard disciplinary procedures.
Detection of skin cancer

Skin cancer may appear as a spot, freckle or mole that has developed or changed in size, shape, colour or texture. Skin cancer can usually be cured if treated early.

The early diagnosis and treatment of skin cancer relies heavily on early detection, with an emphasis on self-examination.

Recommendations for workplaces

Occupational health and safety legislation requires you to monitor the health of employees. This includes encouraging employees to examine their skin.

You need to give your employees appropriate information, so they can effectively examine their own skin. Your employees should be well informed about:

- the need to check their own skin
- the importance of becoming familiar with how their skin usually looks
- how often they should examine their skin
- the steps to follow to examine their skin
- what to look for when examining their skin
- what to do if a suspicious spot, mole or freckle is noticed.

This information is available from your local Cancer Society.

DID YOU KNOW? The darkness of sunglass lenses should not be used to gauge protection from solar UVR. Some clear lenses may provide maximum protection but a tint helps to reduce glare.
Key early detection messages

Outdoor workers should regularly look at their skin for any changes. Encourage your employees to check their skin at each change of season. It is important workers know what their skin looks like usually so any change will be noticed.

How to check your skin

- Check your whole body, including the soles of your feet, between your toes, your armpits, ears, eyelids, under your fingernails and scalp.
- Use a hand-held mirror or have someone help you to check areas you cannot see, such as your back, back of your neck and your legs.
- Look for a new spot or a spot that is different from the ones around it.
- Look for a sore that doesn’t heal.
- Look for a spot or mole that has changed in size, shape, colour or texture.
- Ask your local Cancer Society for pictures and descriptions of suspicious spots, freckles and moles.

Workers should be advised to see their doctor as soon as possible if they notice anything unusual or have concerns about their skin.

Workplace medical checks and skin cancer

Workplace early detection activities should encourage and provide information to enable workers to examine their own skin. Many workplaces choose to provide skin cancer checks within their regular medical examination activities.

The Cancer Society of New Zealand does not operate, recommend or endorse any skin check services or clinics. However, if your organisation decides to provide a skin cancer check for workers, it is important to choose a medical practitioner or occupational health nurse with expertise and training in the area of skin cancer.

DID YOU KNOW? The price of sunglasses does not have any relationship to protection from solar UVR. Low-cost sunglasses that comply with the sunglass standard can be just as good.
A sun protection policy is a written document that records why and how your workplace will manage the risk to workers of exposure to excess levels of UVR.

**A workplace sun protection policy**

(Insert name of company) recognises that skin cancer is a major health risk for New Zealanders, including outdoor workers, who are often exposed to excessive levels of solar ultraviolet radiation (UVR).

Because UVR produced by the sun can cause skin cancer and damage to skin and eyes the company has established a sun protection policy that is implemented during peak UVR periods. The peak UVR periods are from the beginning of September to the end of March, especially between the hours of 11am and 4pm.

**Policy provisions and requirements**

The company is required to:

- identify any practices that are barriers to achieving sun safety in the workplace
- involve employees and managers in the development and implementation of any new sun safety policy
- ensure there is a supervisor or manager responsible for the implementation of the policy at all levels of the organisation

Outdoor workers will be provided with and must wear:

- clothing that covers as much of the body as possible (long-sleeved shirts with collars, long trousers or knee-length shorts)
- clothing of a close weave to restrict sunlight penetration, which is lightweight and permeable to assist with the evaporation of sweat and where possible, has an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of 50+

Hats will:

- shade the head, face, neck and ears
- have a broad brim and be of a close weave material
- use a brim attachment in the case of hard hats
- have a flap of fabric attached to the back of the hat or hard hat to protect the back of the neck
Sunglasses will:
• fit closely and wrap around the face
• conform to standards AS/NZS 1067:2003 and AS/NZS 1337:1992 (safety glasses standard)

Sunscreen will:
• be broad spectrum and SPF 30+
• be stored below 30 degrees
• conform to standard AS/NZS 2604:1998

Work periods will:
• be rotated so the same people are not exposed to the sun all the time
• involve varied work times so employees are not exposed to the sun for long periods during the highest risk times (from 11am to 4pm between the start of September and the end of March)

Shade will be:
• used as much as possible to reduce daily UVR exposure either by moving jobs indoors or to shady areas outdoors
• provided, where possible, in the form of fixed or portable shade structures

Information and resources will be provided to ensure employees:
• have access to up-to-date information about skin cancer
• understand the importance of being familiar with how their skin usually looks
• know how to examine their skin
• know what to look for
• know what to do if a suspicious spot, mole or freckle is noticed

This information is available via leaflets and posters from the Cancer Society of New Zealand, www.cancernz.org.nz, or contact your local Cancer Society office.
Employees will be expected to:

- co-operate with all measures introduced by management to minimise the risks associated with exposure to solar UVR
- comply with instructions and advice in regards to the use of sun protection control measures
- participate in any sun protection education programmes
- act as positive role models
- take all practicable steps to ensure their own safety when working in the sun

Monitor and review
This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis or at least every two years.

Name (Please print)

Position

Signature

Date  Date of next policy review
Cancer Society contact details

National Office Cancer Society of New Zealand
Tel: 04 494 7270
Fax: 04 494 7271
admin@cancer.org.nz

Auckland Division (Auckland)
Tel: 09 308 0160
Fax: 09 308 0175
acs@akcansoc.org.nz

Canterbury/West Coast Division (Christchurch)
Tel: 03 379 5835
Fax: 03 377 2804
enquiries@canty.cancernz.org.nz

Central Districts Division (Palmerston North)
Tel: 06 378 8039
Fax: 06 378 8042

Otago and Southland Division
Tel: 03 477 7447
Fax: 03 477 6669
admin@cansoc.org.nz

Waikato/Bay of Plenty Division (Hamilton)
Tel: 07 838 2027
Fax: 07 838 2028
admin@cancersociety.org.nz

Wellington Division
Tel: 04 389 8421
Fax: 04 389 5994
info@cancersoc.org.nz
ANY CANCER, ANY QUESTION

0800 CANCER (226 237)
Cancer Information Helpline

For further information on sun protection and skin cancer visit the Cancer Society of New Zealand website www.cancernz.org.nz.

Sun protection products can be purchased from the Cancer Society of New Zealand. They are also available at supermarkets, K Mart, Farmers, The Warehouse, selected pharmacies and some Cancer Society Divisions/Centres.