



**SUN SAFETY POLICY GUIDE
FOR OUTDOOR WORKERS**



ALBERTA
CANCER
FOUNDATION

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The Need for Sun Safety Policies

An Albertan born today has a one in seven risk of developing skin cancer in their lifetime. Skin cancer has become the most commonly treated form of cancer in Alberta, with 4,500 cases reported annually. Fortunately, most of these cancers can be prevented if we change our attitudes and behaviours towards sun exposure.

Those who work outdoors can usually attest to the dangers of the sun and the frequency of sunburns. What some may not realize is that sunburns and exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun increase their risk of developing skin cancer. Outdoor workers, due to the nature of their employment, are not only at greater risk for this disease, but have fewer options when it comes to avoiding the sun.

In addition to skin cancer, ultraviolet radiation is linked to

- the formation of cataracts,
- the weakening of the immune system,
- premature aging of the skin.

These risks are also linked to heat exhaustion and heat stroke, which in turn contribute to lost work and to job site injury.

The damage caused by the sun, the lost work due to sun exposure, and the long-term health consequences that arise from it, can be prevented through healthy sun behaviour. This guide offers information to facilitate policy development and encourage the adoption of healthy sun behaviours for outdoor workers. Moreover, adopting many of the safe sun policies in this guide may reduce the risk of heat exhaustion and heat stroke for outdoor workers.

Farmers, construction workers, maintenance workers, recreation workers, and tourism industry workers are among the many Albertans who are required to spend time outdoors as part of their employment. By being outdoors and exposed to the sun year round, or during the summer months when ultraviolet radiation is at its peak, these workers are at a greater risk for skin cancer and other health concerns that arise from sun exposure.





Employer/Worker Responsibilities

Alberta Workplace Health and Safety. http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/law/employer_worker.asp

Employer Responsibilities

The Occupational Health and Safety Act says that you, as an employer, must do everything you reasonably can to protect the health and safety of your workers. This means:

- equipment must be kept in safe working order.
- dangerous chemicals must be properly labelled and stored.
- safe work practices must be set up for your workers and you must ensure these practices are followed.
- you must ensure that your workers have the skills and training needed to do their jobs safely.
- it is your responsibility to inform your workers of any dangers at the job site.
- you must monitor workers who may be exposed to certain controlled products. In some cases, specific health examinations may be required.

Worker Responsibilities

As a worker, the Occupational Health and Safety Act requires you to work safely and co-operate with your employer by following the health and safety rules for the job.

The Act also has specific safety requirements you must follow. For example, you are required to use a safety belt or similar equipment when doing certain kinds of work, and you must use personal protective equipment, such as footwear, eyewear, and headwear, when necessary.



Work Practices in Alberta

Alberta's Workplace Health and Safety regulations do not require that employers and workers adopt a sun behaviour policy. However, adopting such a policy makes good sense for both parties by reducing the long-term risk of cancer for workers and the short-term threat of lost work for employers.

Overexposure to the sun can affect both indoor and outdoor workers, though outdoor workers have much higher risks due to increased exposure. Serious sunburns, eye damage, and skin cancer are just a few of the risks that can affect outdoor workers if they do not practice healthy sun behaviour. A sun behaviour policy can help make outdoor workers aware of the risks associated with sun exposure and the precautions that may reduce those risks.

There are many simple changes in behaviours and employment practices that can reduce outdoor workers' exposure to ultraviolet radiation that can be included in a sun behaviour policy. These options range from wearing protective clothing or sunscreen use to providing shade for work sites. It makes sense to encourage outdoor workers to adopt sun safety practices and reduce the risks to their health.

The health risks of sun exposure depend on the following factors:

- The amount of sun exposure during the day, including breaks.
- The time of day that the worker is exposed to the sun.
- What, if any, shade is provided in the workplace.

This policy guide provides the framework of a sun safety policy for outdoor workers. Adopting such a policy will increase awareness of the risks of exposure to the sun and the benefits of practical healthy sun behaviours.





Practical Behaviours

Wide-brimmed or legionnaire style hats provide protection for the face, ears, and neck and offer far more protection than baseball caps.

- Hats with a brim of at least 8 cm offer the most protection.
- Hats with only a visor offer very limited protection for the face, ears, and neck.
- Construction helmets should have a brim attachment.

Sunglasses protect the eyes from ultraviolet radiation and permanent damage.

- Sunglasses should have 100% UVA and UVB absorption.
- Wrap-around sunglasses, or those with large lenses, offer the most protection.

Use and frequent re-application of a broad-spectrum SPF 15+ sunscreen.

- Higher SPF sunscreens offer increased protection.
- Broad-spectrum sunscreens absorb both UVA and UVB radiation.
- Companies interested in supplying sunscreen but with concerns about adverse reactions can contact the Canadian Dermatology Association for more information on sunscreen effectiveness and danger.

Long-sleeves and pants provide protection from sun exposure.

- Loose fitting clothes with a tight weave offer more protection from the sun.
- Where long sleeves are not practical, sunscreen should be applied to all exposed skin.

In locations where sun exposure is inevitable, schedule work before 11am or after 4 pm when possible.

- If the job has administrative or office duties, they can be scheduled for this time.
- If work must be scheduled during these hours, extra effort should be made to practice other types of healthy sun behaviour.
- Check the UV Index™ for daily forecasts of UV radiation intensity.

Provide shade at the site, even with temporary shade structures, that outdoor workers can use while working or to take breaks in.

- Rotating workers between shaded and exposed locations on the worksite can provide protection for those who cannot avoid exposure during peak hours.



Policy Development

Policy development should be a co-operative, collaborative effort, involving management and workers. For a policy to be successfully adopted, all interested parties should participate.

If a formal sun exposure policy is adopted for your outdoor workers and workplaces, it should be communicated clearly to workers, and become the responsibility of the workers to use any sun protection equipment or facilities provided. A formal policy should also attempt to minimise the risks and duration of sun exposure during the work day.

If your organization already has a sun exposure policy designed to prevent heat exhaustion, minor changes can improve it so that it will help workers reduce their risk of the skin damage that may lead to cancer.

Steps for policy development

1. Consultation and Education

Risk assessment.

Have workers complete the attached risk assessment checklist.

Form a committee or group to develop a sun safety policy.

Management, workers, occupational health and safety representatives, and representatives from the local health authority are potential members of such a committee.

Educate staff on the issues through discussions or sun awareness materials.

Distribute materials or have an information session on the risks.

Involve workers in the development of the policy.

Determine what concerns workers may have about sun exposure and how a sun safety policy might impact their duties.

Suggestions and policy must be based on sound knowledge of the risks and hazards.

Consider sun exposure in relation to other job site risks, and develop policies that complement other health risks, such as heat exhaustion.



2. Design and Implementation

Develop sun exposure/awareness goals that will reduce health risks.

After consulting with workers and completing the risk assessment, set targets to improve healthy sun behaviours at work and reduce the risks of exposure.

Example Policy Goals:

- Increase skin cancer awareness among workers.
- Educate outdoor workers on the adoption of safe sun behaviours.
- Work towards a safe work environment that reduces sun exposure.
- Encourage outdoor workers to exercise safe sun behaviours.

Redesign tasks to include practical behaviour to reduce health risks.

Example Task Changes:

- Administrative or indoor duties can be performed during peak exposure times.
- Some work can be done under the cover of shade, then finished during lower exposure periods in areas where shade isn't available.
- Provide the daily UV Index™ forecast to workers through on-site communication.

Develop guidelines to implement the policy.

Example Guidelines:

- Shade structures should be provided for workers.
- Workers should use broad spectrum SPF 15+ sunscreen when working outside for more than 20 minutes.
- Workers should wear a hat with an 8cm brim where appropriate.

Identify potential barriers to reducing the risks.

Example Barriers:

- Cost of supplies (ie. sunscreen, hats).
- Difficulty communicating the sun safety policy.
- Worker attitudes.
- Acceptance of policy by management and workers.



3. Review and Evaluation

Monitor sun exposure and sunburns.

Have workers complete risk assessments on an annual basis to monitor change.

If risk assessments show no improvement, review the policy to determine why healthy sun behaviours are not being adopted.

Consult with outdoor workers about ways to improve compliance/behaviours.

Staff meetings can be used to educate workers and to gain feedback on policy issues.

Once workers have an understanding of the risks, they can better advise on what job changes will reduce those risks.

Work to eliminate barriers reducing safe sun behaviour.

If an informal sun safety policy is developed and communicated, workers should be provided with the necessary information to practice safe sun behaviour. And even if a formal policy is not introduced, steps like providing shaded break areas can be taken with little effort.

Policy Development Checklist

SUN PROTECTION STRATEGY	CURRENTLY IN PLACE	PLANNED WITHIN TWO YEARS	NO COMMITMENT TO THIS STRATEGY	COMMENTS
Policy				
We have a written sun protection policy				
Our policy is reviewed at least every two years				
Our staff and management have participated in the development and/or review of the policy				
Sun Protection Education				
Skin cancer information is incorporated into training activities				
Sun protection is actively promoted				
Staff have access to up-to-date resources				
Sun protection is regularly promoted in at least one of the following; newsletter, training, or staff meetings				
Clothing				
Staff wear hats whenever they are outdoors				
Staff wear suitable hats (wide-brimmed) that protect their faces, necks, and ears whenever they are outdoors				
Workers are encouraged to wear a hat whenever they are outdoors				
Suitable hats, clothing, and sunscreen are recommended for all outdoor workers				
Staff are encouraged to wear UV protective sunglasses where practical when involved in outdoor work				
Sunscreen Use				
Use of SPF 15+ sunscreen is actively promoted for staff				
SPF 15+ sunscreen is easily accessible for staff				
Provision is made for reapplication of sunscreen when necessary prior to outdoor work				
Shade				
We have assessed whether the amount of shade available at worksites is adequate				
We are committed to increasing the amount of shade available when the opportunity arises				
Outdoor Work				
Where possible, outdoor work is scheduled before 11 am or after 4 pm				
Sun protection strategies are incorporated into worksite preparations and training				



Sample Sun Policy:

A policy to encourage healthy sun behaviour should be a consideration for both employers and those who work outdoors. Policy development and implementation requires the cooperation and coordination of all parties in the workplace if there are to be real changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour with regards to sun exposure.

There are several basic elements that can provide the foundation for a sun behaviour policy. However, sun policy development should be a dynamic process and should be able to change in response to evaluation and circumstances.

(Organization)'s Sun Safety Policy

Recognizing that healthy sun behaviour can have a positive impact on the overall health of our employees, (Organization) will provide a safe workplace by reducing sun exposure on the part of our employees.

By adopting this policy, (Organization) aims to reduce sun exposure by introducing and supporting appropriate strategies for sun protection.

Where possible, work will be carried out in shaded areas or temporary shade will be erected.

When possible, outdoor work will be scheduled before 11 am and after 4 pm, when UV radiation is at its peak.

Employees who are working outdoors are encouraged to wear a wide brimmed hat, legionnaire style hat, or helmet brim attachment, appropriate clothing, and a broad spectrum SPF 15+ sunscreen.

(Organization) will provide broad spectrum SPF15+ sunscreen for employees from May to August.

(Organization) will include safe sun behaviours and considerations in future strategic plans and in the training of outdoor workers.

(Organization)'s new employees will be provided with sun safety materials during staff orientation, and will be given a copy of the sun safety policy.

Each year, employees with duties outdoors will be required to complete a risk assessment in order to determine if safe sun behaviours are being adopted.



Workplace Education

Educating employees about the risks of sun exposure and the preventative measures they can take should be at the heart of any sun safety policy. There are a number of professional and health organizations that with educational resources that assist in the development of a short information session. Local public health nurses may be able to assist with development as well. Additionally, information about healthy sun behaviour can be included in staff newsletters, enclosed with pay slips, or through posters or flyers.

Educational materials or sessions on healthy sun behaviours can be integrated into staff training or annual workplace safety refresher courses. These sessions are best timed during the spring or early summer to coincide with the increased risk of the season.

Educational Resources

A number of organizations provide sun awareness educational materials that may be of use to outdoor workers. The Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Dermatology Association, and your local regional health authority may have useful materials or personnel that can help with educational efforts.

Canadian Dermatology Association

c/o Sherlock Communications
5562 Swordfern Place
North Vancouver, BC V7R 4T1
Phone: (604) 985-9184 Fax: (604) 271-2408
website: <http://www.dermatology.ca/>

Canadian Cancer Society

Suite 200, 2424 – 4th Street SW
Calgary, AB T2S 2T4
Phone: (403) 228-4487 Fax: (403) 228-4506
website: www.cancer.ca

Alberta Cancer Board

1331 29th Street NW
Calgary, AB T2N 4N2
Phone: (403) 944-4888; Fax: (403) 270-8003
website: www.cancerboard.ab.ca
e-mail: prevention@cancerboard.ab.ca

For educational information and materials on developing policies and guidelines to improve workplace safety, contact Workplace Health and Safety.

Workplace Health and Safety, Government of Alberta

Phone: 1-866-415-8690; Fax: (780) 422-3730
<http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/>
email: whs@gov.ab.ca



Staff Training Checklist

TRAINING TOPIC	COMPLETED
Health Issues	
Sun exposure and sun burns increase the risk of developing skin cancers	
Policies to reduce the risk of developing skin cancer can help reduce the risk of heatstroke	
Hats	
Hats with just a visor (Baseball caps, golf caps) are NOT effective protection	
Hats should have a wide brim (8cm) around the entire head	
Sunglasses	
Sunglasses should have 100% UVA and UVB absorption	
Wrap around sunglasses, and those with large lenses, offer the best protection	
Sunscreen Use	
Broad spectrum (absorbs UVA and UVB) sunscreen	
Apply 20 to 30 minutes before going into the sun	
Waterproof sunscreens generally last for about 80 minutes in the water, then need to be reapplied	
Should be reapplied at least once every two hours, after swimming, heavy rain, or heavy perspiration	
Sunscreen should be applied to all exposed skin, including the neck, ears, and hands	
Clothing	
Cover arms and legs with long sleeved shirts and pants	
Close knit fabrics protect more than loose knit fabrics	
Exposure and Shade	
Limit exposure between 11 am and 4 pm when possible	
Seek or create shade when possible, using tents, trees, and shade structures	
Reflective surfaces, like concrete, sand, and water, increase levels of UV exposure	
Comprehensive	
No one type of sun protection is completely effective. Sunscreen, clothing, and seeking shade are all important	
Measures to prevent sunburn can also reduce the risk of heatstroke	



Sun Facts: Skin Cancer

Why be concerned about skin cancer?

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Alberta and rates of skin cancer are increasing. In 2000, over 4,500 new cases of skin cancer were diagnosed in Alberta.

What causes skin cancer?

Repeated exposure to UV radiation from the sun is the principal factor in the development of skin cancer. In the short term, too much sun can produce a sunburn. Over the long term, UV radiation can cause premature aging of the skin, skin cancer, cataracts, and other forms of eye damage, and may weaken the immune system.

Who is at increased risk of the skin damage that contributes to skin cancer?

People who work or play outdoors, fair skinned people who sunburn easily, people with several moles, and people with a family history of melanoma are at an increased risk of developing skin cancer.

How serious is skin cancer?

Non-melanoma skin cancers are not typically life-threatening and can be treated in doctors offices. Melanoma is the least common but most serious type of skin cancer because it can spread to other organs if not treated.

Most skin cancers are curable if treated early and can be prevented by reducing exposure to UV radiation.

What are the signs of skin cancer?

Moles or pigmented spots can be a sign of skin cancer, as can sores that do not heal, new growths on skin, or patches of skin that bleed, ooze, swell, or itch.

The A, B, C, D, E signs of skin cancer

Asymmetry: One half of a mole or sore is unlike the other half.

Border irregular: The border of the mole or sore is poorly defined or uneven.

Colour: Colour varies from one area of the mole or sore to the other.

Diameter: If the mole is larger than 6mm (size of a pencil eraser) it may be of concern.

Evidence of change: If a mole or sore is growing, changing colour, or otherwise altering over time.



Sun Facts: Frequently Asked Questions

When should I protect myself from ultraviolet (UV) radiation?

While the risks of sun exposure are highest on sunny, clear days, UV radiation can penetrate clouds and reflect off most outdoor surfaces, so protective measures should be taken during any extended period of outdoor exposure.

Does a suntan protect me from UV radiation?

Suntans provide protection equivalent to SPF three to five. The protection offered by a suntan will make little difference if you spend any extended time in the sun. And a suntan is a sign of skin damage that has already occurred.

What role do hats play in sun protection?

A wide brimmed or legionnaire style hat that provides shade for the face, ears, and neck can prevent 80% of sun exposure. Thus, while cowboy and Tilley™ hats provide excellent protection, baseball caps and visors do not offer adequate protection from the sun.

Construction helmets can have a brim attachment which will increase the protection they offer from the sun. However, reflected ultraviolet radiation from the surrounding environment means that sunscreen should still be applied.





How can clothing protect outdoor workers?

The best clothing options reduce the amount of exposed skin. Loose fitting, long sleeved shirts, pants, and similar clothing offer the best protection from the sun. Also, the closer the weave of the fabric in the clothing, the better protection it offers.

Why use sunglasses?

Sunglasses can prevent ultraviolet radiation from causing eye damage and reduce the risk of cataract development. Sunglasses should provide UVA and UVB protection and block 100% of ultraviolet radiation and 80% of light.

Why use sunscreen?

Sunscreen offers protection for areas of skin that are not protected by clothing and is an important tool in preventing the long term skin damage caused by sunburns. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that absorbs both UVA and UVB rays, and with a sun-protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Look for sunscreen containing oxybenzone, Parsol 1789, or Mexoryl SX, which are effective against UVA.

Sunscreen is only one tool for sun safety and should be practiced in conjunction with other safe sun behaviours.

How should sunscreen be used?

Sunscreen should be applied to any exposed skin 15 to 20 minutes before going out into the sun. It should be reapplied at least once every two hours.

Choose a broad spectrum sunscreen that is appropriate for your skin and lifestyle, such as gels, sprays, lip balms, lotions or creams. Apply it liberally to exposed skin, including ears, neck, nose and temples. Reapply your sunscreen at least once every two hours, especially after getting wet. Remember that no sunscreen offers complete protection, and never use a sunscreen to prolong time spent in the sun.



Does drinking water help?

While drinking water does play a role in preventing heat exhaustion and heat stroke, it does not reduce the other health risks from sun exposure.

What is the UV Index™?

The UV Index™ uses a simple numerical scale to inform people about the strength of the sun's UV rays. The higher the number, the stronger the sun, and the greater the need to take "sun-wise" precautions. The UV Index™ appears in most daily papers and on the Environment Canada website.

Low	4 or less	Few precautions are necessary for normal activity. Anyone out in the sun for more than an hour should protect themselves from the sun.
Moderate	4 to 6.9	Take precautions to limit UV exposure. These include: finding shade, wearing a hat, sunglasses, and clothing that provide sun protection and using a sunscreen.
High	7 to 8.9	Sunburns and skin damage can occur quickly. Avoid sun exposure between 11am and 4pm and follow all of the other sun protection measures listed above.
Extreme	Over 9	Burns and skin damage can occur in less than 15 minutes. Minimize exposure and take full precautions as above.



What factors affect UV radiation levels?

Time of Day:

The amount of UV is greatest around noon when the sun is directly overhead. At this time, the UV rays are stronger because they travel through less of the atmosphere. In the early morning and later afternoon, the sun's rays pass through the atmosphere at an angle, which greatly reduces their intensity.

Time of Year:

The sun's angle varies with the seasons, causing the intensity of UV rays to change. UV intensity is highest during the summer months.

Altitude:

The sun's UV radiation increases with altitude, so people at higher altitudes are at increased risk of overexposure.

Weather Conditions:

Cloud cover reduces UV levels, but not completely. Depending on the thickness of the cloud layer, it is still possible to sunburn – and there is still the risk of eye and skin damage. On a cloudy summer day, even if it does not feel very warm, there is still a risk of exposure. Light cloud or a breeze can make you feel cooler – but they don't reduce the UV radiation.

Nearby Surfaces:

You get much more UV on snow, sand, water or concrete, since these surfaces reflect the sun's rays back onto your skin, just like a mirror. The brighter the surface, the more UV is reflected - fresh snow and dry sand reflect the most.

Risk Assessment Checklist

Location of work:

Job Responsibilities/Duties:

Environmental Factors:

TIME OF DAY:

- Before 8:00 a.m.
- After 4:00 p.m.
- 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
- 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
- All day

RISK

LOW

HIGH

SEASON

- Winter
- Autumn/Spring
- Summer
- All year

RISK

LOW

HIGH

Work System Factors:

SHADE DURING WORK:

- Indoor work
- Total shade
- Partial shade
- No shade

RISK

LOW

HIGH

SHADE FOR BREAKS:

- Indoor breaks
- Total shade
- Partial shade
- No shade

RISK

LOW

HIGH

HAVE EMPLOYEES EVER BEEN SUNBURNT AT WORK?

- No
- Yes

Comments

Comments

HAZARDOUS FACTORS:

The presence of reflective surfaces in the workplace can significantly increase the risk posed by UV radiation.

PRESENCE OF REFLECTING SUBSTANCES:

- Concrete
- Sand
- Glass
- Snow
- Roofing iron
- Water
- Aluminum foil

PROTECTIVE FACTORS:

Protective equipment can provide some protection from UV radiation. The more equipment used, the lower the risk to the worker.

USE OF APPROPRIATE CLOTHING/PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Wide-brimmed or Legionnaire's hat
- Construction helmet with brim attachment
- Long-sleeved shirt
- Full length pants
- Sunglasses (UVA/UVB absorption)
- Broad spectrum SPF 15+ sunscreen
- Portable shade structure

ARE YOU EXPOSED TO PHOTOSENSITIVE MATERIALS?*

- No Yes *See next page.



Photosensitivity

Photosensitivity is a condition in which the skin and eyes become abnormally reactive to UV radiation of any type. There are a number of factors that can play a role in the development of photosensitivity, some of which can be found in the workplace.

Photosensitivity can result from most types of exposure to photosensitisers, including ingestion, inhalation, and skin contact.

If a workplace uses photosensitisers, it will increase the risks from UV radiation for workers that are exposed to them.

Among the substances that can cause photosensitivity;

Dyes

- Acridine
- Eosin
- Erythrocin
- Fluorescin
- Methylene Blue
- Rhodamine
- Rose Bengal

Coal tar and Derivatives

- Anthracene
- Phenanthrene
- Pitch
- Creosote

Chlorinated Hydrocarbons

- Chlorobenzols
- Diphenyls
- Triphenyls



Contacts

Alberta Cancer Board, Division of Epidemiology, Prevention & Screening

1331 – 29 Street NW, Calgary, AB T2N 4N2

Phone: (403) 944-4888; fax: (403) 270-8003

email: prevention@cancerboard.ab.ca

Canadian Cancer Society, Alberta/NWT Division

Canadian Cancer Society, Suite 200, 2424 – Fourth Street SW, Calgary, AB T2S 2T4

Phone: (403) 228-4487; Fax: (403) 228-4506

Canadian Dermatology Association

774 Echo Drive, Room 52, Ottawa ON K1S 5N8

Phone: (613) 730-6262 or 1-800-267-3376; Fax: (613) 730-8262

email: contact.cda@dermatology.ca

Cancer Information Service (Canadian Cancer Society)

1-888-939-3333

Workplace Health and Safety, Government of Alberta

Phone: 1-866-415-8690; Fax: (780) 422-3730

email: whs@gov.ab.ca

Web sites

Alberta Cancer Board

<http://www.cancerboard.ab.ca>

Canadian Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.ab.ca>

Canadian Dermatology Association

<http://www.dermatology.ca>

Environment Canada UV Index™

http://www.msc-smc.ec.gc.ca/cd/uvforcast_e.html

Workplace Health and Safety

<http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/>





Sun Safety Handout for Workers

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