

TOOLBOX TALK · HEALTH

Sun and Skin

About 7 minutes to deliver

Outdoor workers get far more lifetime UV than anyone else, it accumulates from the days you did not burn, and the damage shows up decades later.

If you work outdoors you take several times the lifetime ultraviolet dose of someone who works inside. It accumulates — from every ordinary day, not just the ones where you burned — and it shows up twenty or thirty years later as skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer there is, and outdoor workers get more of it than almost anybody.

THE THINGS PEOPLE GET WRONG

- Cloud does not stop it. A large share of UV comes through overcast, which is why people burn on grey days and are surprised.
- It is worse than you think off surfaces. Concrete, metal roofing, water, sand and fresh snow all reflect UV back up at you — under a hat, under a hard hat brim, and up under sunglasses.
- Tanning is damage. A tan is the skin's response to injury; there is no such thing as a safe base tan.
- Cold does not mean safe. UV in April is not much less than UV in July, and nothing about the temperature tells you about it.
- 10am to 4pm is when most of the dose lands.

WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS, IN ORDER

- Clothing first. A long-sleeved lightweight shirt beats any sunscreen because it does not wear off, does not get missed, and does not need reapplying. Tightly woven or UPF-rated.
- Cover the neck and ears. A hard hat brim leaves both exposed, and the ears and the back of the neck are common cancer sites. A brim attachment or a neck shade costs almost nothing.
- Sunscreen where clothing cannot go — face, neck, ears, hands, and the back of the neck. SPF 30 or higher, broad spectrum, a proper handful, reapplied every two hours and after sweating. Most people use about a quarter of what they should.
- Sunglasses that block UV. UV causes cataracts and damages the surface of the eye, and safety glasses are available with UV protection as standard — ask for them.
- Shade for breaks, which does double duty against heat illness.

CHECK YOUR SKIN

You will see it before a doctor does, because you see it every day.

Look for a mole or a spot that is asymmetric, has an irregular border, is more than one colour, is bigger than a pencil eraser, or is changing — and for any sore that will not heal, any new rough scaly patch, or anything that bleeds and scabs over and comes back.

Take it to a doctor. Skin cancer found early is almost always dealt with easily. Found late, it is a different conversation entirely.

ASK THE CREW

- Who is outside all day today, and is anyone in short sleeves?
- Do our hard hats have brims or neck shades, and would people wear them?
- Is there sunscreen on this site, and is there shade for breaks?

29 CFR 1910.132 · 29 CFR 1926.28

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

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Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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