

Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines – Working Outdoors

The Australian National University is committed to promoting and maintaining a safe and healthy environment for staff, students, visiting fellows and contractors alike. The aim of this document is to provide information and guidance on the prevention of sun related exposures.

Exposure Hazards and Risks

Australia has the highest incidences of skin cancers in the world and yet Australians are now at an even greater risk of developing skin cancer with 2 out of every 3 persons living to 75 years developing some form of cancer. In Canberra, a person reaches their UV exposure limit within minutes. In high enough doses can lead to the growth of cancerous tumours within the skin tissue, the degradation of sight and the degraded efficiency of the immune system.

The greatest risk to personal health is during seasons and climatic condition where there is little cloud cover and intense illumination of the sun. Typically in Canberra this is between the hours of 10:00am to 3:00pm and where there are a number of reflective surfaces such as water, glass, white surfaces and bare steel and other metals.

Risk Groups

- Grounds Officers
- Security Officers
- Maintenance Staff
- Field Work/ Research Staff and Students
- Sports and Recreation Staff
- Construction Workers
- Outdoor Sportspersons



Slip on sun protective clothing



Slop on SPF30+ sunscreen. Reapply every two hours



Slap on a broad-brimmed hat



Seek shade



Slide on wrap-around sunglasses

Prevention and Control

Hats:

- Broad-brimmed hats (with a diameter of greater than 7cm) or hats with canvas flaps (UPF rating of 50+)
- Worn at all times when outdoors

Eyes:

- Close-fitting wrap around sunglasses or close-fitting sunglasses with side shields should be worn
- Sunglasses must comply with the Australian standard AS/NZS1067: 2003 eye protection factor rating of 10

Skin:

- Apply broad spectrum waterproof SPF30+ 20minutes before conducting work outdoors and every 2 hours following
- SPF 30+ lip balm and zinc should be applied to the lips

Clothes:

- Loose fitting, breathable clothing (UPF rating of 30+)
- Light colours to avoid trapping heat
- Long sleeves and legs to reduce direct UV contact with skin
- Please consider the following clothing recommendations when working near the bees or flowering plants:
 - Wear light coloured clothing, as bees are more attracted to bright and reflective colours; and
 - Avoid fragrances, deodorants and after shave lotions as these may attract bees.

Fluids:

- Maintain a supply of water within the working area
- Drink at least 600ml of water within every 2 hours of exposure to avoid heat related illness

(http://info.anu.edu.au/hr/OHS/Hazard_Alerts/_Avoiding_Heat_Related_Illnesses.asp)

Shade:

- Utilise natural sources where possible
- As natural sources shift with the sun, so should any work being carried out within it
- Work under portable awnings, tents, marque covers and/or reinforced structures
- Continued use of other preventative measures

Work Practice:

- Minimise the amount of outdoors work where possible
- Organise work to avoid UV peaks (10am-2pm or 11am-3pm Daylight Saving) where possible
- Rotate staff on outdoor intensive duties to reduce exposure
- Provide awareness and best practice training, information and supervision to ensure compliance with organisational procedures
- Move jobs under cover where possible, while this will not eliminate exposure it will filter the intensity of UV exposure
- Monitor the daily UV index maintained daily by ARPANSA (<http://www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/index.cfm>)
- Monitor and review control measures and modify as needed through consultation and statistics

Resources

NOHSC 3012 (1991) Guidance Note for the Protection of Workers from the Ultraviolet Radiation of Sunlight

The Cancer Council Online Publication (2007) – [Skin Cancer and Outdoor Work: A Guide For Employers](#)

ACT Work Cover Online Publication (2006) – [A Guide to Sun Safety for Outdoor Workers](#)

Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), (2008) – <http://www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/index.cfm>

For additional information, please contact the Occupational Health and Safety Branch:

Phone: (02) 6125-2193

Fax: (02) 6125-7545

Email: ohs.officer@anu.edu.au