

# Sample solar UV protection policy for outdoor workers

## Background

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Ireland with over 13,000 cases diagnosed annually and the NCRI has estimated that between 2015-2045 the incidence of skin cancer will almost double<sup>1</sup>. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun and artificial sources (i.e. sunbeds) is the main risk factor for the development of skin cancer<sup>2</sup>.

Those who spend all or part of the day working outdoors are at an increased risk of skin cancer as the nature of their occupation exposes them to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Outdoor workers can be exposed to between 2-3 times more UV radiation than indoor workers<sup>3</sup>.

It is recommended that the organisation use [a SunSmart framework for skin cancer prevention in outdoor workers](#) to implement the policy. The framework will help to strategically implement the policy.

Assess if there is a risk of hazardous levels of exposure to solar UV radiation associated with performing tasks outdoors by using the [Solar UV Exposure Risk Assessment for Outdoor Workers](#).

## Rationale

Sun protection should be an important issue for all organisations with outdoor workers. Organisations have an obligation to provide a working environment that is safe and without risks to health. This should include taking proper steps to reduce the known health risks associated with exposure to solar UV for outdoor workers.

This sample SunSmart Policy is intended as a guide only. Organisations should use this sample policy as a model when developing their own SunSmart Policy and make amendments that suit their needs and practicalities.

## Sample SunSmart Policy

Name of club organisation

SunSmart policy

### Aims

This policy aims to reduce employee's exposure to solar UV from the sun to reduce their risk of skin cancer by implementing appropriate sun protection measures.

This policy outlines how to provide an environment that supports sun protection across the organisation.

### Commitment

will provide guidance to employees on reducing the risk of skin damage for employees who are required to work while being exposed to solar UV radiation for prolonged periods of time.

## Employer sun protection strategies could include

### 1. Engineering Controls

- Provide shaded areas or temporary shade structures for work.
- If shade is not possible, another option may be to relocate work to take advantage of existing shade if possible.
- Provide indoor areas or shaded outdoor areas for rest/lunch breaks.
- Consider applying window tinting to the sides of windows.
- Move work away from reflective surfaces such as concrete slabs or modify reflective surfaces where possible.
- Identify and minimise contact with photo-sensitizing substances e.g. industrial chemicals, medications and some plants.

## 2. Administrative Controls

- Plan outdoor work tasks to be carried out when solar UV is lower. This is typically before 11am and after 3pm from April to September in Ireland.
- Schedule indoor/shaded work tasks to when UV is strongest, such as the middle of the day.
- Move tasks to a shaded area or indoors when possible.
- Rotate staff between indoor/shaded and outdoor tasks to reduce exposure.
- Check the solar UV index on [www.met.ie](http://www.met.ie) to support this action.

## 3. Personal protective equipment

- Provide and ensure use of appropriate sun protective PPE including:
  - Sun-protective clothing is included as part of the uniform.
  - Tops/jerseys are made from UPF (UV protection factor) 50+ material and have long sleeves and a collar. Tops/jerseys are loose-fitting and lightweight.
  - Hats that shade the face, head, ears and neck, are made from UPF50+ material, and are a broad-brim, bucket or legionnaire style hat.
  - Attachable brims and neck flaps when wearing a hard hat.
  - Wrap-around sunglasses with 100% UVA and UVB protection. Sunglasses should meet the EN 170/EN 172 standards to protect eyes from solar UV radiation.
- Sunscreen
  - Wear a broad spectrum (UVA/ UVB) sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30+ for adults, with high UVA protection, and water resistant should be used. Sunscreen should be applied at least 20 minutes before going out in the sun and re-applied every two hours and more often if getting wet or sweating.
  - Sunscreen should be easily accessible and expiry dates checked regularly.
  - Store in a cool place (below 30 degrees) to prevent deterioration and reduced effectiveness.
  - A lip balm containing SPF30+ or higher is also recommended.
  - No sunscreen offers 100% protection from solar UV; it should be used alongside other protective measures such as clothing and shade.

## 4. Awareness raising and education

- Ensure sun protection training is provided to workers.
- Promote SunSmart awareness messages through communication channels e.g. newsletter, social media channels, e-mail lists, notice boards at briefings.
- Promote sun protective behaviours in prominent areas as a reminder to employees.
- Include sun protection as part of health and safety programmes and for induction of new workers.
- Ensure managers and supervisors act as positive role models in all aspects of sun safe behaviour, by following the [Healthy Ireland SunSmart 5 Steps](#).
- Promote the use of sun protection measures 'off the job'.
- Ensure employees are provided with information on checking their skin regularly and to consult their GP promptly if any cause for concern.
- Inform individuals about the organisation's SunSmart Policy when they join.

## Employees sun protection strategies could include

- Co-operate with all measures introduced by management to minimise the risks associated with exposure to solar UV radiation.
- 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 to other employees.
- Take all practicable steps to ensure their own safety when working in the sun.

Name of organisation

This SunSmart policy will be reviewed regularly.

This policy was last updated on

Date

Next policy review:

Date

## References

1. National Cancer registry. Cancer incidence projections for Ireland 2020-2045. Cork: NCRI; 2019.
2. Skin Cancer Prevention Plan (2019-2022). Department of Health, Ireland 2019.
3. CAREX Canada. Occupational Exposure Estimate for Solar UV Radiation. (2018)
4. Skin cancer and outdoor work. A work health and safety guide. Cancer Council Victoria 2018.