



What You Need to Know, What You Need to Do, How to Do It *The Rhino Safety Series of Fact Sheets*

Sun Safety

If you are an employer and you have staff who work outside, your responsibilities include an obligation to ensure that your workers stay safe in the sun.

What are the risks?

Exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun can cause skin damage including:

- Sunburn
- Blistering
- Skin aging
- Long term effects including various skin cancers.

People with pale skin are most at risk of skin damage, especially those with fair or red hair. However, it is imperative to recognise that over-exposure to the sun can damage all skin types, including 'tanned', brown and black skins.

Of course, it isn't just skin damage that can occur as a result of over-exposure to the sun. You must also take into account the dangers from heat, and in extreme circumstances, humidity. Extremely high temperatures, and extremes of humidity, can pose other health risks to those working outside, including:

- Heat exhaustion
- Hyperthermia
- Dehydration
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of consciousness.

In extreme cases, some of these conditions can result in death.

What should employers do?

Employers must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of those workers who will be exposed to such risks during their working time. Certain recommended precautions may be beyond the reasonable control of the employer; such as the application and reapplication of protective sunscreen, where a worker may choose not to use the protection. However, an employer should still encourage such steps, and educate the workers on the reasons behind the recommendation.

Making Safety Second Nature

Employer Checklist:

- ✓ If possible, schedule outside work to take place during cooler periods.
- ✓ Include advice regarding Sun Safety in routine Health and Safety training. Inform workers that even mild reddening or a 'light tan' is evidence of skin damage.
- ✓ Encourage workers to stay covered up in the sun. Close-woven clothing provides a good barrier to the sun's harmful rays; but ensure that the clothing does not exacerbate heat issues. Light, natural fabrics such as cotton and thin denim offer good protection against the sun without over-heating the wearer. You may want to consider implementing a 'keep your top on' policy as recommended by the HSE; we can help with this.
- ✓ If outside work cannot be avoided during hot and sunny periods, ensure that your workers have been encouraged to wear clothing that gives good coverage, a sunscreen with an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of at least 15, and a hat with a brim or flap to protect the head, ears and neck.
- ✓ Ensure that workers take regular rest breaks in the shade.
- ✓ Provide an ample supply of drinking water for workers to access as and when they need it. Encourage regular hydration.
- ✓ Inform your workers about the dangers of sun and heat exposure, and encourage them to check their skin regularly for unusual or changing spots or moles.

For further information or to discuss the specific implications for your business, please contact us at:

info@rhinosafety.co.uk or 01270 440 341.

Did you find this fact sheet useful? If so, please let us know and share it on our social media platforms – find us on Twitter and LinkedIn by entering 'Rhino Safety Limited' into your preferred internet browser. Alternatively, send a brief email with your comments to info@rhinosafety.co.uk



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