



Sun Exposure at Work

Sun exposure is a serious – and largely preventable – occupational hazard. It is the leading cause of skin cancer and can cause other health issues including sunburn, skin damage, cataracts, eye damage, and heat stress.

Approximately 1.5 million Canadians are exposed to the sun on the job, according to CAREX Canada estimates.¹ About 67% of these outdoor workers spend two or more hours a day working in the sun.² The largest industrial groups exposed to sun in Canada are construction, farming, and building care and maintenance.¹

According to the Canadian Cancer Statistics, 1 in 3 new cancer cases in Canada are skin cancer, making it the most common type of cancer in the country.³ Outdoor workers have a 2.5-3.5 times greater risk of developing skin cancer than indoor workers.⁴ In 2014, as many as 7,000 skin cancers were attributed to occupational sun exposure.¹

The risk of heat stress for outdoor workers is well defined and continues to be an important issue. Heat stroke is the most deadly form of heat stress. Other health conditions caused by heat stress include heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and heat rash. There were more workers' compensation lost time claims for illness from heat stress in government services, agriculture, and construction, compared to other industry sectors.⁵

The good news is that skin cancer and heat stress are largely preventable. While elimination and substitution of the sun are not possible, there are a number of strategies workplaces can use to reduce the risk of overexposure to the sun for outdoor workers. However, many workplaces find it challenging to implement effective sun protective measures - that's where Sun Safety at Work Canada can help. Both workers and workplaces have an important role to play in reducing the risks of working outside in the sun.

References: 1. [CAREX Canada, 2015](#). 2. [Marrett LD, et al, 2010](#). 3. [Canadian Cancer Society, 2014](#). 4. Radespiel-Tröger, M., et al., 2009. 5. Fortune, M. K., et al., 2013.



Sun Safety at Work Canada Project

Sun Safety at Work Canada is a national project funded by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. The project started in April 2014 and will run to September 2016. The purpose of the project is to develop a nationally-applicable, effective, and sustainable sun safety program for outdoor workers that will address both skin cancer and heat stress prevention and can be implemented by individual workplaces.

Piloting Sun Safety Programs

The project involves implementing sun safety interventions with 16 worksites in three regions across Canada. The workplaces are focused on the development and implementation of tailored sun safety programs, which include best practices and resources to protect outdoor workers from occupational sun exposure. The information and lessons learned from the pilot phase will be shared and inform the rest of the project.

Supporting Workplaces across Canada to Implement Sun Safety Programs

The project is developing a comprehensive website that will house a range of resources for OHS practitioners, supervisors, and workers. The website and resources will enable workplaces throughout Canada to implement effective, customized and sustainable sun safety policies and practices that meet an organization's needs.

Opportunities for Engagement

- Include sun safety in your newsletter or on your website
- Include sun safety messaging in social media outreach during National Sun Awareness Week or throughout the summer
- Bring in a Sun Safety at Work Canada speaker to lead a workshop with members
- Request further information on a particular topic

Contact sunsafetyatwork@ryerson.ca for more information.



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