

PREPARATION

Familiarise yourself with your employer's summer working policy and share it with listeners during this talk.

PURPOSE

We have developed this toolbox talk to explain the risks of skin cancer, how to protect the skin, and how to detect skin cancer.

BACKGROUND

Most cases of skin cancer are caused by sun exposure when UV radiation from the sun mutates and damages the DNA of skin cells. Melanoma is an aggressive skin cancer and non-melanoma is a less aggressive type of skin cancer. Aggressive skin cancer can spread to other parts of the body and has a higher death rate than other skin cancers.

Construction workers are almost twice as likely to develop skin cancer as those in other industries that also largely work outdoors.

42% of reported skin cancer cases caused by work-related sun exposure are from the construction industry.



9 in 10 cases of skin cancer* are preventable.

RISKS

When UV radiation can cause skin damage

In the UK, the sun is usually strong enough to damage skin from mid-March to mid-October. It's not just on clear sunny days that your skin needs to be protected. 90% of UV rays can pass through cloud and damage the skin.

Water, snow, sand, concrete and metal can all reflect and intensify UV radiation, putting construction workers at a higher risk.

You have a higher risk if you have...

- ✓ fair skin that burns easily
- ✓ lots of moles on your skin
- ✓ a family history of skin cancer
- ✓ a history of bad sunburn or tanning

Areas of the body most at risk are...

- ✓ Arms and hands
- ✓ Back and shoulders
- ✓ Scalp and face, including ears and eyes
- ✓ Neck, especially the back of the neck

*This statistic applies to melanoma only.

PROTECT

Skin cancer can take 20 years to develop. It is important to protect yourself now.

Know your site's policy

Check you are working to your site's summer working policy. This means complying with the minimum required sunscreen SPF protection and covering your skin in the right areas.

How to stay protected

Sunscreen should be applied to all parts of exposed skin at least 20 minutes before going outdoors, and reapplied at least every two hours. It is recommended a minimum of 30 SPF protection is used.

You should also...

- ✓ Take breaks in shaded areas
- ✓ Use neck protection fitted to your hardhat
- ✓ Keep covered with lightweight clothing and wear eye protection

The shadow rule

The heat from the sun is created by infrared rays. UV rays have no temperature and their intensity is determined by the angle of the sun on the horizon. Use the shadow rule:

When your shadow is shorter than you are tall, UV rays from the sun are more likely to damage your skin.

DETECT

Melanoma UK has developed an acronym for detecting mole and skin concerns.

If you notice a mole that fits just one of the 'ABCDEFGF' skin criteria, make an appointment with a doctor.

When you book an appointment

- ✓ Make a note of when you first noticed the abnormal mole or area of skin, and if there's been any changes to it
- ✓ Tell your doctor if you're worried about cancer
- ✓ Tell your doctor if you have a family history of cancer



Asymmetry

Asymmetrical moles



Border

Moles with uneven border



Colour

Moles with two or more colours



Diameter

Moles larger than 5mm



Elevation

Moles that are becoming raised



Firm

Moles that feels firm or solid



Growing

Moles that show signs of change