

Skin Cancer in Construction

Toolbox Talk H30



Aim of the tool box talk is to raise awareness to the real risk of skin cancer in construction workers due to UV exposure.

Solar radiation is the radiant energy emitted by the sun. The sun emits different kinds of light, some of which we can see and others that are invisible:

- the visible light you see
- the infrared radiation you feel as heat
- the ultraviolet (UV) radiation that produces tanned skin.

It's the UV radiation element of the sun which can lead to premature ageing, wrinkles and skin cancer if precautions aren't taken to protect our skin when outside.

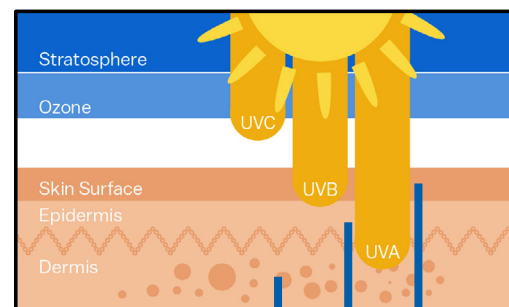
UV radiation is classified into three bands:

- **UVA** – accounts for around 95 per cent of the UV radiation reaching the earth's surface. This type penetrates deeply into the skin and is principally responsible for premature ageing and wrinkling of the skin, as well as skin cancer
- **UVB** – the majority of this type of UV radiation is filtered by the ozone layer before reaching the earth's surface. This type of radiation is more damaging than UVA, affecting outer layers of the skin and causing sunburn, as well as premature ageing, wrinkles and ultimately skin cancer
- **UVC** – the most dangerous type of UV radiation, but mostly prevented from reaching the earth's surface by the ozone layer.

7 people a day die of skin cancer in the UK, so that means that in 12 days, the fatality rate for this has matched that of the 365 days of 'safety' fatalities across all industry's.

Disturbingly UV radiation is also involved with **welding**. Out of **24** welders tested on a project, **23** of the welders were noted to be identified with signs of skin cancer due to the UV exposure from the welding operations

Operatives in the UK, should be exposed to a **MAXIMUM** of 20-25 minutes of sun per day, in reality, there are only 4 weeks of the year we don't have to wear sun cream.....



Layers of the Human Skin

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers. There are two main groups: Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer (NMSC) – this often occurs on areas of exposed skin when outdoors like the neck or head. Harmful ultraviolet radiation (even on cloudy days) damages the skin and can lead to a NMSC developing. The first sign is often a lump or patch on the skin that doesn't heal after a few weeks. These lumps are often red and firm while the patches are mostly flat and scaly.

Malignant Melanoma – this cancer occurs in the skin cells called melanocytes. These are the cells where the skin pigment melanin is found. It is a rarer but much more serious cancer that can spread to other organs in the body and often proves fatal. The most common sign is the appearance of a new mole or a change in an existing mole. These often have an irregular shape and more than one colour. They can sometimes also be itchy or bleed.

SKIN CANCER KILLS 60 WORKERS A YEAR IN BRITAIN

5 WORKERS A DAY GET SKIN CANCER IN BRITAIN

60% OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS HAD SUNBURN AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR

2/3 OF UK CONSTRUCTION WORKERS OUTSIDE FOR NEARLY SEVEN HOURS A DAY DON'T KNOW THEY ARE AT RISK OF GETTING SKIN CANCER

Cancer Research UK suggests that outdoor workers are at higher risk from non-melanoma skin cancer - 55 per cent of work-related non-melanoma skin cancer cases and 42 per cent of malignant melanoma cancer cases involve construction workers.

STAY SAFE IN THE SUN



Protect your skin from harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun when you're working. Follow five simple steps to make sure you enjoy the weather, without putting your health at risk.



1 COVER UP

Wear long, loose clothing to keep the sun off your skin.



2 PROTECT YOUR HEAD

Don't forget your head, face, ears and neck – wear a hat, preferably with a wide brim, and sunglasses with UV protection. If you wear a hard hat, use one fitted with a Legionnaire-style flap. If you wear safety goggles, make sure they have a UV filter.



3 SEEK SHADE

Come out of the sun whenever possible during the most powerful ultraviolet periods (10am–3pm), and remember to stay in the shade during breaks.



4 USE SUNSCREEN

Use SPF 30 or higher on any exposed skin – apply it half an hour before going outside, put plenty on and reapply it frequently.



5 BE SKIN SAFE

Report mole changes (size, shape, colour, itching or bleeding) or any other concerns about your skin to your doctor as soon as possible – don't put it off, early treatment is important. Have a look at our simple skin check guide on the other page.



THE UV INDEX

The strength of the sun's rays isn't connected to the temperature – check the UV index. You'll find the index on many weather forecast apps and websites.

FIVE WORKERS A DAY GET SKIN CANCER*



LOW

(1,2)

You can safely stay outside.



MODERATE

(3,4,5)

Take care during midday hours and don't spend too much time in the sun unprotected.



HIGH

(6,7)

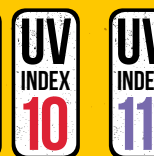
Seek shade during midday hours, cover up and wear sunscreen.



VERY HIGH

(8,9,10)

Spend time in the shade between 10am and 3pm. Covering up and sunscreen essential.



EXTREME

(11+)

Avoid being outside in midday hours. Covering up and sunscreen essential.

