



## SUNBURN HAZARDS

We all enjoy being outside when the weather is pleasant. And after a long winter, warming temperatures and sunny conditions lure us out of doors for work-related tasks, or just for recreation. Many occupations require employees to be outdoors for at least part of the time. Employees need to be trained to recognize and avoid all workplace hazards, including those that can occur outside.



Sunburn

Overexposure to the sun causes sunburn. The ultraviolet rays of the sun can produce a painful burn that can be as severe as first or second-degree. The reflection of water, sand, or snow can also intensify the sun's burning rays. The best protection against sunburn is prevention. Sunburn is caused by ultraviolet light from the sun. These rays activate melanin, which is the body's protective pigment against the sun, and turn the melanin brown. This creates a tan.

Minimize unprotected sun exposure, and especially avoid the peak hours of the sun's rays. Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Protect the eyes with sunglasses that have UV protection and use a lip balm with sunscreen. Years of unprotected sun exposure can cause premature aging and cancer of the skin. UV radiation causes genetic mutations in skin cells. Over time, such mutations due to exposure to the sun and severe sunburns can lead to skin cancer.

Sunscreen can not only prevent sunburn, it can greatly reduce your chances of getting skin cancer from the sun. When you look at a bottle of sunscreen, you will see a number, called the SPF. This number, which varies according to the strength of the sunscreen you need, is a number you can use to find out how many minutes you can stay in the sun without being burned.

Some recommendations OSHA has provided for protection from the sun include:

- Wear clothing that does not transmit visible light. If you can see your hand through the fabric, the garment offers little protection against sun exposure.
- Wear a wide-brim hat to protect the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp. A hard hat with a 360-degree brim is effective.
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher to block out at least 93% of the UV rays.
- Sunscreen should be applied at least 15 minutes before going outdoors and reapplied every 2 hours. OSHA states that sunscreen must be used in situations where it is the only effective means of protection.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes. Sunglasses should block 99 - 100 percent of UV radiation. Check the label to make sure they do. Darker glasses do not necessarily provide more protection. UV protection comes from a chemical applied to the lenses, not from the color or darkness of the lenses.
- Limit direct sun exposure. The most intense UV rays occur during the high mid-day sun, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Work in the shade, whenever possible.
- Check the daily UV index