

Tailored Sun Safety Messages for Outdoor Workers

CAREX Canada

The sun safety messages below are tailored for outdoor workers. These messages have been developed after conducting a needs assessment, literature review, and consultation with stakeholders and experts. The messages have been categorized and any combination of messages can be used for KT products.

Key Facts

- Ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun causes skin cancer, cataracts, and other forms of skin and eye damage.
- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Canada, and one of the most preventable.
- Outdoor workers are at an elevated risk of developing skin cancer and experiencing the harmful effects of sun exposure as they spend a lot of time outdoors.
- The sun's rays are harmful all year round but especially from 11am to 3pm between April and September in Canada.
- Even when it's cloudy, UVR can be harmful.

Primary Recommended Actions: Protect your skin.

- In Canada, the UV index is generally 3 or higher from 11am to 3pm between April and September, even when it's cloudy. When the UV Index is 3 or higher, protect your skin as much as possible.
- Seek shade when you can. Use tents, tarps or canopies at work when possible. Take breaks in the shade.
- Wear loose protective clothing and hats that cover as much skin as possible, including the face, ears and neck. A brim or neck flap can be attached to caps or hardhats to protect your face, ears and back of neck.
- Use sunscreen labeled "broad spectrum" and "water resistant" with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Apply sunscreen generously and re-apply frequently.
- Use a lip balm with an SPF of at least 15.

Primary Recommended Actions: Protect your eyes.

- Wear safety glasses, sunglasses, or prescription eyeglasses with UV-protective lenses.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat or attach a brim to your hardhat for added eye protection at work.

Additional Recommendations

- Check the daily forecast at the start of the workday for the UV Index and protect your skin accordingly.
- Between April and September, whenever possible, plan any unshaded outdoor work for before 11 a.m. or after 3 p.m.
- Avoid working outdoors without shade during the hottest time of the workday when possible.

Tips: Shade

- Where possible, work in natural, dense shade or use a good-quality shade structure that offers shade from the side and not just overhead, to protect against UVR that is reflected and scattered off concrete, water, sand, snow, and light-coloured surfaces.
- As a general guide, wider and denser sources of shade provide increased protection.

- Cloth shade structures should have tightly woven fabric. If sunlight passes through the fabric, it provides less protection.
- Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) (clothes, glasses with UV-protective lenses and sunscreen) is recommended even when in the shade to protect against reflected and scattered UVR.

Tips: Clothing

- Hats should shade the head, face, ears, and back of the neck with a wide brim or neck flap.
- Light-coloured, tightly woven or UV-protective labelled clothing is recommended.

Tips: Sunscreen

- Sunscreen should be used on exposed skin. Remember to apply sunscreen on the ears and neck, and use sunscreen lip balm.
- Use sunscreen that says on the label: “Broad spectrum”, “SPF 30 or higher” and “water resistant”
- Use a generous amount of sunscreen and re-apply frequently when doing physically strenuous work.
- Use any type of sunscreen (sprays, lotions, gels or creams) you find easiest to use and apply it properly with thorough coverage.
- Store sunscreen in a cool and accessible place such as a site office instead of hot areas such as the glove compartment of a vehicle. Do not use expired sunscreen as it’s less effective.

Tips: Eye protection

- UVR that is harmful to the eyes is present in the sun’s rays all year round and throughout the workday.
- Eye protection is required, especially around highly reflective surfaces, such as buildings, snow, sand and water.
- Wear close-fitting, wraparound, UV protective sunglasses or safety glasses for the best UV eye protection.
- Look for safety glasses, sunglasses, or prescription lenses with full UVA and UVB protection. Examples of appropriate labels are “UV400” or “100% UV protection.”