

Working Outdoors Policy

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Purpose

goal is that all workers should return home unharmed at the end of the working day, and that no person should be adversely affected as a result of the organisation's operational activities. Safety is a value built into everything that we do.

recognises that working outdoors in the Australian environment exposes workers to a number of risks including ultra violet exposure and heat stress.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, students and any other persons otherwise affiliated but not employed by who are considered workers by definition in the Occupational Work Health and Safety Act of 2004.

Policy Statement

This policy is designed to raise staff awareness of the risks that workers may be exposed to, and will detail how will, as far as is reasonably practicable, protect its workers from these risks.

We will achieve our objectives by:

- educating staff about UV exposure and heat stress.
- identifying situations where staff are at risk of either UV radiation or heat stress and minimising these risks
- identifying and supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff.
- requiring the installation and use of the SunSmart app on all supplied smartphones.

Heat Stress

To keep healthy, our body temperature needs to stay around 37°C. The body cools itself by sweating, which normally accounts for 70 to 80 per cent of the body's heat loss. If a person becomes dehydrated, they don't sweat as much and their body temperature will keep rising.

Causes of Heat Stress

Factors that contribute to heat stress include:

- Sun exposure
 - Temperature
 - Humidity
 - Dehydration
 - Bushfires
 - Amount of air movement
 - Radiant temperature of surroundings
 - Clothing
 - Physical activity (metabolic heat load)
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Symptoms of heat-related illness

It is important to know the signs and symptoms of heat exposure. Symptoms vary according to the type of heat related illness. Symptoms include:

- **Deterioration in existing medical conditions** - this is the most common health problem of heat stress.
- **Heat rash** - sometimes called 'prickly heat', this is a skin irritation caused by excessive sweating. It can occur at any age, but is most common in young children. It looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters. It is most likely to occur on the neck and upper chest, in the groin, under the breasts and in the elbow creases.
- **Heat cramps** - these include muscle pains or spasms, usually in the abdomen, arms or legs. They may occur after strenuous activity in a hot environment, when the body gets depleted of salt and water. They may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.
- **Dizziness and fainting** - heat-related dizziness and fainting results from reduced blood flow to the brain. Heat causes an increase in blood flow to the skin and pooling of blood in the legs, which can lead to a sudden drop in blood pressure. There can be a feeling of light-headedness before fainting occurs.
- **Heat exhaustion** - this is a serious condition that can develop into heatstroke. It occurs when excessive sweating in a hot environment reduces the blood volume. Warning signs may include paleness and sweating, rapid heart rate, muscle cramps (usually in the abdomen, arms or legs), headache, nausea and vomiting, dizziness or fainting.
- **Heatstroke - this is a medical emergency and requires urgent attention.** Heatstroke occurs when the core body temperature rises above 40.5 °C and the body's internal systems start to shut down. Many organs in the body suffer damage and the body temperature must be reduced quickly. Most people will have profound central nervous system changes such as delirium, coma and seizures. The person may stagger, appear confused, have a fit or collapse and become unconscious. As well as effects on the nervous system, there can be liver, kidney, muscle and heart damage. The symptoms of heatstroke may be the same as for heat exhaustion, but the skin may be dry with no sweating.

If you or a co-worker are presenting with any of these symptoms, you should seek medical attention.

Minimising the Risks from Heat Stress

recognises that its field workers occasionally work in hot conditions in an open paddock for extended periods of time. For this reason, in these conditions, once the temperature reaches 36 degrees Celsius, each worker will take a paid ten minute break each hour, until the temperature reaches 40 degrees at which point work must stop. Work must not resume until the temperature drops to below 40 degrees again. The measurement of temperature should be taken from Bureau of Meteorology site, using the closest reported town as a guide.

Any worker that is recognised as suffering from heat stress at any temperature should cease work immediately and seek medical attention.

UV Exposure

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is a type of radiation that is produced by the sun and some artificial sources, such as solariums. The sun's UV radiation is the major cause of sunburn, premature ageing, eye damage and skin damage leading to skin cancer. However, it is also the best natural source of vitamin D.

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Despite being an almost entirely preventable disease it continues to affect at least one in every two Australians during their lifetime. Of all new cancers diagnosed in Australia each year, 80% are skin cancers.

Employees who work outdoors for all or part of the day have a higher than average risk of skin cancer. This is because ultraviolet radiation in sunlight or 'solar UVR' is a known carcinogen. All skin types can be damaged by exposure to solar UVR. Damage is permanent, irreversible and increases with every exposure.

UV Exposure & Vitamin D

recognises that whilst UV radiation is harmful to its workers, an adequate amount of vitamin D is also essential for good health.

The best source of vitamin D is UVB radiation from the sun. UV radiation levels vary depending on location, time of year, time of day, cloud coverage and the environment.

As advised by the Australian Cancer Council, when the UV Index is 3 or above (such as during summer), most people maintain adequate vitamin D levels just by spending a few minutes outdoors on most days of the week.

In late autumn and winter in some southern parts of Australia, when the UV Index falls below 3, spending time outdoors in the middle of the day with some skin uncovered, helps to maintain adequate levels of vitamin D.

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer occurs when skin cells are damaged, for example, by overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.

There are three main types of skin cancer:

- Basal cell carcinoma
- Squamous cell carcinoma
- Melanoma - the most dangerous form of skin cancer

Both basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma are known as [non-melanoma](#) skin cancer.

Become familiar with the look of your skin, so you pick up any changes that might suggest a skin cancer. Look for:

- any crusty, non-healing sores
 - small lumps that are red, pale or pearly in colour
 - new spots, freckles or any moles changing in colour, thickness or shape over a period of weeks to months (especially those dark brown to black, red or blue-black in colour).
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Causes of Excessive UV Exposure

- Sun exposure
- Welding flash
- Glare from reflective surfaces (such as vehicles or snow)
- Tanning beds (banned in all states and territories in Australia)

Symptoms of Excessive UV Exposure

- **First Degree Sunburn** -mild sunburn that reddens and inflames the skin
- **Second-degree sunburn** - more serious reddening of the skin and water blisters
- **Third-degree sunburn**- requires medical attention; blistering, headaches, nausea, vomiting, dizziness or severe pain.
- **A feeling that there is a foreign body in the eye** - this could be caused by retinal damage

If you or a co-worker are presenting with these symptoms, you should seek medical attention.

Applying sunscreen

Apply sunscreen liberally - at least a teaspoon for each limb, front and back of the body and half a teaspoon for the face, neck and ears. Sunscreen must be rated at least SPF30 or above.

SunSmart App

A free SunSmart app tells you when sun protection is recommended for your location using forecast information drawn from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website and live UV data from the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA).

Minimising the Risks from UV Radiation

Personal Protective Equipment

will provide all outdoor workers with the following PPE for their use:

- long sleeved vented tops
- white wide brimmed hats
- UV filter sunglasses
- sunscreen

All staff must have the SunSmart app installed on their smart phone, and set up to send daily reminders about the risky UV exposure times for that day.

When working outdoors, staff must wear long sleeved tops and wide brimmed hats between the start of October each year and the end of March. Sunglasses and sunscreen (a minimum of SPF 30+) must be worn between the hours advised by the SunSmart app each day.

All Workers are strongly encouraged to monitor their skin regularly for the early signs of any skin cancer.

Responsibilities

Management will:

- wherever possible schedule outdoor work tasks to occur when levels of solar UVR are less intense, such as earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon
- provide training to employees to enable them to work safely in the sun
- ensure training is provided as part of induction for new employees
- ensure managers and supervisors act as positive role models
- adopt sun protection practices during all company social events
- promote the use of sun protection measures 'off the job'
- display and promote educational material to help workers identify changes to their skin

Employees will:

- cooperate with all measures introduced by management to minimise the risks associated with exposure to solar UVR and heat stress
- comply with instructions and advice in regards to the use of sun protection control measures
- participate in sun protection education programs
- act as positive role models
- be responsible for their own sun protective practices at work.

Non-Compliance

aims to operate in a 'no-fault' environment as far as possible. Where staff are deemed to have complied to the best of their abilities, and with good intentions, the internal consequences of a minor breach of this policy will be limited to further training, consultations, policy review and other such actions.

Deliberate, reckless or serious breaches of this policy or related Work Health and Safety Policies will be dealt with by disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Legislation

Occupational Health and Safety Act of 2004

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations of 2017

Related Policies

[WHS Policy](#)

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, as well as after any major changes to relevant legislation.
