

# Sample SunSmart workplace policy for outdoor workers

This SunSmart policy provides guidelines to ensure that outdoor workers are protected from damaging levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun[[1]](#footnote-1).

Introduction

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Workers who spend all or part of their day outdoors have a higher risk of skin cancer because they spend more time exposed to UV radiation. Skin cancer is serious, results in lost productivity, and can be deadly. Fortunately, workplace SunSmart policies that are embedded into every day practice can significantly reduce the UV radiation risk to outdoor workers. Workplace policies work best if employers and employees work together to develop, implement and monitor them.

Employers have a duty of care to not put workers at risk from UV radiation under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 2015. If UV radiation is identified as a potential hazard, employers must take steps to eliminate and minimise the risk, as far as is reasonably practicable.

Guidance

Workers who spend **some or all of their day** outdoors should use sun protection measures between September and April when the UVI is above 3, or when outdoors for extended periods of time.

Employees who work outside **all day** are advised to use sun protection measures year-round because UV damage accumulates over time. Even low UV levels can be harmful if workers are exposed for long periods.

Outdoor workers with certain health conditions or taking medicines that make them sensitive to the Sun should also always use sun protection[[2]](#footnote-2)

As you cannot see or feel UV radiation, managing the risk of UV radiation requires regular monitoring of UV levels. The level (intensity) of UV radiation is measured by the ultraviolet index (UVI). The higher the UVI number, the greater the potential for damage to the skin and eyes. Check the UV Index for your location by downloading the UVNZ app on your smartphone.

### **[*Organisation/business name*] SunSmart workplace policy:**

**1. Employer responsibilities**

As your employer we are required to protect you from workplace risks. We understand our responsibility as an employer to monitor your UV radiation exposure. Because exposure to UV radiation can cause skin cancer and eye damage we will take steps to minimise your exposure during work hours.

*As you work outdoors, we will:*

1.1 Monitor and assess UV risk

* check UV radiation levels every day to inform you when UVI levels will be 3 and above, so you can adjust scheduled work.
* regularly assess our workplace/s to make sure you are protected and take steps to eliminate or minimise risks (as below).

1.2 Reschedule work tasks

* when possible, schedule outdoors work when UV levels are lowest, such as earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon.
* rotate indoor and outdoor tasks among employees so you are not constantly exposed to UV radiation.

1.3 Provide and encourage shade and sunscreen use

* encourage you to work in shade and take lunch and tea breaks in the shade as much as possible.
* provide portable shade (such as pergolas and tents) wherever possible for outdoor tasks if existing shade such as buildings or trees are not available.
* try to move tasks inside if shade is not available.
* make sure you can access a shaded area in between work tasks or during breaks.
* provide sunscreen of at least SPF 30 in easily accessible places.
* Consider tinting work vehicle windows.

1.4 Encourage skin checks

* develop a system of reminders for you to regularly check your skin on your whole body (at least monthly) for new spots, changes in an existing spot (shape, colour, size) or other skin changes.
* help you understand the importance of having suspicious spots or any concerns about your skin checked by your GP or skin specialist.

1.5 Training and induction

* provide worker training to improve knowledge and understanding of sun protection measures (e.g., understanding UV radiation, correct use of PPE) and information about effectively checking your own skin.
* ensure training is provided as part of induction for new workers.
* promote sun-protective behaviour in prominent areas as a reminder.
* ensure managers and supervisors act as positive role models.

1.6 Record and monitor incidents

* develop a system where we can all record incidents of UV radiation related injuries.
* Develop procedures for managing non-compliance, such as refresher training.
* Monitor incidents to assess what improvements we can make to reduce the chances of sunburn and heat exhaustion/fatigue.

1.7 Policy monitoring and review

* assign employees to regularly monitor, implement and update policy.
* monitor and review the effectiveness of the sun protection policy at least every two to three years and revise the policy when required.
* policy changes will be communicated to all employees.

**2. Employee responsibilities**

*As our employee we expect you to:*

2.1 speak up if you are concerned about your UV radiation exposure and/or have suggestions on how we can better keep you safe.

2.2 report instances of sunburn and heat exhaustion to [*add name/position*].

2.3 regularly check your own skin for changes that could indicate skin cancer.

2.4 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

You must wear clothing and sunscreen to protect you from UV radiation when working outside.

As necessary, this PPE could include:

**sun-protective work clothing:** that covers as much of your skin as possible. Ideally fabric should be medium to dark coloured, of natural fibre, lightweight and tight weaved to ensure protection from UV radiation while still allowing your skin to breathe. Clothing with an Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) of 50+ will guarantee all-day protection. Sun-protective work clothing should be safe for the work conditions it is being used in (e.g., avoid loose clothing around machinery).

**hat/hard hat/helmet** with a wide brim/peak/flap that protects your head, face, ears and neck. Caps do not provide adequate sun protection.

**sunglasses** that are wrap-around and fit closely to your face and meet UV protection Standard AS/NZS 1067 or UV protectant glasses (tinted or marked ‘O’ for outdoor use).

**sunscreen:** this should be water-resistant, broad-spectrum, at least SPF 30, meet the AS/NZS standard 2604, and within its expiry date.

* sunscreen should be **applied 20 minutes before going outside** and **reapplied every two hours**, especially if you are sweating and/or working in water.
* **use a cream, lotion or gel sunscreen** and avoid aerosol/spray sunscreens if possible (these are not as effective as it is difficult to ensure enough sunscreen is applied evenly to the skin).
* sunscreen should be **stored below 30 degrees** as high temperatures (such as from being left in a vehicle’s glove box) can stop it being effective. If it is necessary to carry sunscreen in a work vehicle, store it in a cooler or lunchbox with an icepack.
* if working in highly **reflective environments** such as water, sand, and metal roofing, remember to apply sunscreen under the chin and the nose and apply to areas not usually exposed to the sun.
* lip balm containing SPF30 (or higher) should be used to protect lips.

# 8. More information

3. More information

If you have a query about this policy or need more information, please contact *[list contacts].*

4. Review details

This policy was adopted by *[Business/organisation name]* on *[insert date]*

This policy was last updated on *[insert date]*

**Useful information**

Cancer Society. SunSmart general information: www.cancernz.org.nz

Melanoma NZ. Spotting it early: www.melanoma.org.nz/early-detection

Worksafe Aotearoa. Protecting workers from UV solar radiation: www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/work-related-health/protecting-workers-from-solar-uv-radiation/ (includes information about duty of care obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015)

Wellplace.nz. Your guide to workplace wellbeing: www.wellplace.nz. Resources available: www.wellplace.nz/resource-library/check-your-skin-for-cancer

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## Adapted from Wellplace.nz. Workplace SunSmart policy for outdoor workers. Available: https://wellplace.nz/ideas-and-advice/sunsmart/how-you-work-and-lead/

1. Workplaces are welcome to use this policy directly or incorporate into existing policy. Please consider the specific needs of your workplace and modify this policy where necessary.

2. This includes people with autoimmune diseases, conditions that weaken the immune system, have had an organ transplant, or take medicines that increase sensitivity to light (e.g., some antibiotics, NSAIDs such as ibuprofen, some diabetic and heart pressure medications). Please check with your doctor. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)