

POLICY FOR HEALTH, SAFETY & WELFARE

PART C - ARRANGEMENTS

Section 27

WORKING OUTSIDE IN HOT WEATHER

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1. AIM

The aim of this arrangement is to explain the measures that need to be taken by Directors and Managers to protect employees from damage to their health that can be caused by working outside in hot weather. This forms part of our commitment to complying with statutory obligations to protect the health, safety and welfare of all employees.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

As an employer, the Council has a responsibility to establish and monitor health, safety and welfare standards. Directors have a duty to ensure that there are appropriate safe systems within their service areas to reduce the risks associated with working outside in hot weather to their lowest level and comply with this arrangement.

Where these safe systems include provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) then reference should be made to Section 16 of the Corporate Health, Safety and Welfare policy.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT

Managers are required to carry out risk assessments to identify the health effects of working outside in hot conditions and introduce control measures to reduce the likelihood of illness and injury. Section 1 of the Corporate Health, Safety and Welfare policy explains how to carry out Risk Assessments and effectively manage health and safety.

People most at risk of skin cancer tend to have;

- fair skin that burns when exposed to strong sunlight
- red or fair hair
- moles or freckles
- a genetic history of skin cancer
- been sunburnt in the past or have sun damaged skin

It is important to recognise that people with darker skin can suffer sunburn. Everyone needs to take care in strong sunlight to avoid eye damage and dehydration.

4. THE HAZARDS OF HOT WEATHER

Hazards from the sun – Although some exposure to the sun can be beneficial (it helps us to produce vitamin D), exposure to Ultraviolet radiation from the sun can cause skin damage including sunburn, blistering of the skin, premature skin ageing and could lead to skin cancer. Working in direct sun can also cause over-heating. The safest option is to avoid working in direct sunlight by organising working hours and locations.

Hazards from heat - In hot conditions, even away from direct sun, there is an increased risk of dehydration, heat stroke and fatigue. Some of the factors which can affect the risk from working outside in hot weather are;

- High air temperature
- Humidity levels (low humidity can contribute to dehydration and high humidity to heat stroke)
- Working with hazardous substances, such as solvents
- Low air movement
- Exposure to the sun
- Intense physical activity or high work load
- Clothing - impairing air movement

A single risk factor, such as air temperature, should not be used in isolation to predict the risk to staff; the risk assessment should take all of the factors into account. The more of these factors that are present the greater the risk.

5. CONTROL MEASURES

Measures to reduce the risk to health from working outdoors in hot weather could include;

5.1 Work Organisation

- Reorganise work so that more of the work is done in cooler parts of the day - for example early morning; and cooler areas - for example under cover or in shaded areas.
- Consider split-shift arrangements - for example have a break from work during the hottest part of the day.
- Consider reducing the physical demands of work - for example use mechanical assistance.
- Ensure that regular breaks are taken in cooler, shaded areas during hot periods. More frequent breaks may be necessary in very hot conditions.
- Alternate periods of work in hot conditions with periods of work in cooler conditions.
- Ensure a procedure is in place for employees to report heat-related discomfort.

5.2 Environment

- Where possible, work in shaded areas - for example under temporary cover.
- Try to increase air movement - for example use extraction and ventilation equipment where appropriate.

5.3 Cold Drinking Water

- Provide ready access to **cold** drinking water. (cold water will cool people down as well as re-hydrate). Drinking water must be transported in a suitable way to prevent contamination.
- Encourage drinking of water at frequent intervals to replace fluids lost through perspiration.

5.4 Skin Exposure

Suitable clothing should be worn where staff may be exposed to the sun during the summer months.

- Light coloured clothing reflects some of the sun's radiant heat.
- Loose clothing, where this is not a safety hazard (the risk of clothing becoming trapped in machinery), assists evaporation of sweat. Long sleeves will reduce the risk of sun burn on the arms.
- Encourage employees to wear sun hats. This protects the head from overheating. Overheating of the head and the brain is a common cause of sun-stroke.
- Clothing of tightly woven natural fabrics assists in creating a barrier to the sun.
- Encourage the use of sun protection cream of at least factor 15 on areas of the skin exposed to sunlight.

In some parts of the council, working outside in hot weather is part of regular duties during the summer months. It is therefore reasonable to provide sun hats and sun protection cream. Service Areas should consider this in consultation with the Trade Unions.

Some employees have health conditions which may reduce their tolerance to heat. In such cases, medical advice should be considered by managers.

5.5 Information, Training and Supervision

Managers must ensure that staff have sufficient information and training about the risks associated with working outdoors in hot conditions. Simple instructions about clothing, taking regular breaks and drinking plenty of water will assist staff in looking after their health and safety.

It is important that staff working outdoors are regularly supervised and monitoring takes place to ensure they are following safe practice, particularly keeping covered while working outside in the sun.

Section 6 of this document can be issued to staff as guidance in actions to take when working outdoors in hot conditions.

6. THE SEVEN POINT SUN PROTECTION CODE

Below is a brief list of advice that can be followed to reduce the chances of illness or injury resulting from working outside in hot conditions.

- i. Wear loose, light coloured clothing, preferably made from natural fibres such as cotton. Tightly woven fabrics form a barrier to the sun's harmful rays. Always remember to - **Keep your top on!**
- ii. Wear a hat with a brim or a flap that covers the ears and the back of the neck.
- iii. Try to work in shaded areas, erect temporary covers if possible.
- iv. Arrange for breaks in cooler, shaded areas.
- v. Ensure you have access to and drink plenty of, drinking water.
- vi. Use a high factor sunscreen of at least factor 15 on areas of the skin exposed to sunlight.
- vii. Check your skin regularly for any unusual moles or spots. See a doctor promptly if you find anything that is changing in shape, size or colour, itching or bleeding.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

Cancer Research UK run a campaign called **SunSmart**, which provides information to employers and individuals about the risk of skin cancer from sunlight.

Visit

<http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/healthyliving/sunsmart/> for more information.

For information and advice about the risk assessment process, contact the Safety, Health and Wellbeing (SHaW) team:

- shaw@barnet.gov.uk
- 020 8359 7955

The Health and Safety Executive has a section on its website with information for employers, and documents to download.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/issuesandrisk/sunprotection.htm>