

# APS BRIEFING

## Hot Weather Working

## APS BRIEFING: Hot Weather Working

Working in hot weather can affect how workers assess the dangers around them. Heat can make people sleepy and increase the risk of slips, trips, falls, poor manual handling and accidents involving hand tools. This briefing provides information about keeping site workers safe when working in hot weather.

### Key Points

| Do                                                         | Don't                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Schedule work for cooler times of the day                  | Strip off and work without a top                |
| Have regular breaks                                        | Work too long in full sun – take regular breaks |
| Provide cool non-alcoholic drinks                          | Drink freezing liquids – it's best to be cool   |
| Create shady rest areas                                    | Ignore sunburn or blistering                    |
| Cover up - use sunscreen & wear long sleeved shirts        | Drink Alcohol                                   |
| Check skin regularly & seek advice if anything looks wrong |                                                 |

### Background

Global warming suggests that workers onsite will be working in higher temperatures. There is currently no maximum temperature identified for times when outdoor working is unsafe and should stop so managers need to be aware of how to mitigate risk to workers.



### Things to consider

#### Top temperature

There is no mandatory maximum temperature for working outdoors in the UK but, as a guide, excessive temperature is defined by the TUC as anything more than 24 degrees Celsius.

## Sunny side up

People love the sun but a golden tan could indicate skin has been damaged by ultraviolet [UVB] light. Sun exposure can damage health. Short term effects include dehydration, sunburn and blistering. Long term problems can include skin cancers. There are around 50K reported cases on skin cancer in the UK every year – it is one of the most common forms of cancer.

**Remember:** you can still get a tan even if you are using sunscreen because, while sunscreen blocks damaging UVB rays, it doesn't prevent deep-seeping UVA rays from penetrating your skin and giving it colour.

## Heat exhaustion or heat stroke

People often talk about heat strike – but they are more likely describing heat exhaustion. It is important to know the difference. Heat exhaustion is unpleasant but not life-threatening. It is caused when the body loses too much water and salt. Heat stroke is a medical emergency when the body cannot regulate its internal temperature.

### Heat Exhaustion

#### Indication

- ☐ General Weakness
- ☐ Fast, weak pulse
- ☐ Pale, cold, clammy skin
- ☐ Light headedness, dizziness
- ☐ Increased sweating
- ☐ Nausea, vomiting

#### Action

- ☒ Decrease body temperature - take a cold shower or apply cold compresses
- ☒ Move to a cooler place
- ☒ Remove excess layers and clothing
- ☒ Lie down
- ☒ Rehydrate - water works, but you might want to try something that adds back salt and sugars
- ☒ Seek medical help if symptoms persist

## Heat Stroke

### Indication

- ☐ Elevated body temperature [in excess of 40 degrees]
- ☐ Rapid and strong pulse
- ☐ Hot, red, dry or moist skin
- ☐ Loss or change of consciousness

### Action

- ☒ Call 999 for emergency support
- ☒ Move to a cooler place
- ☒ Remove excess layers and clothing
- ☒ Circulate air to speed up cooling

### Special care

Exposure to the sun can damage all skin types – no one is immune. But some people are more at risk. People have to take greater care if they are:

- fair skinned – if they freckle or burn rather than tanning easily;
- red haired or blond; or have
- light coloured eyes; and
- a large number of moles

### Sun screening

Employers should provide water-resistant sunscreen for staff who have to work outside. APS advises the use of factor 50 products. But please be careful and check products are suitable for all users: some people may react badly to sun creams. While not common this can include severe and life-threatening allergic reactions. Providing shaded rest areas is also recommended. This can be as simple as putting up an awning.

- Sun Protection Factor [SPF]: sunscreen with SPF values between 30 and 50 should offer adequate protection from sunburn, even for people most sensitive to sunburn. Sunscreen with SPF 30 blocks around 97% of the UVB rays and SPF 50 blocks 98%.

- Water-resistant products: construction is a sweaty job – consider using a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen. Most are rated to last 40-80 minutes
- Application time: remember, wait & reapply. Sunscreen needs time to absorb into your skin. Wait at least 20 minutes after application to exposed areas before going outdoors. A sunscreen's sun protection factor [SPF] is only fully effective for two hours after you put it on so it should be reapplied every two hours - and more frequently on days with a high UV index. Be sure to check the manufacturer's application recommendations to protect your skin adequately.

It is particularly important to refresh sunscreen on certain burn and skin cancer prone areas of the body and face. That includes the top of the ears, forehead, cheeks, neck and the nose – and, for some, don't forget bald spots, even if you wear a hard hat.

## **Programmed works**

Where possible employers should schedule outdoor work to limit the amount of time workers are in the sun. This may mean starting the working day earlier before it gets too hot or working on later after an afternoon break. This also allow staff to avoid travelling to work when it is hottest.

## **Dress for success**

Outdoor workers should cover up. Employers should consider providing long-sleeved workwear. Shirts should have collars that can be turned up to protect the neck. At a minimum no one should take their tops off when working in the sun. Darker coloured workwear is more effective than white. Gloves not only protect against cuts, abrasions and caustic substances but keep the hands protected when exposed to the sun for long periods.

## **Wet! Wet & Wait!**

Employers should provide cool – not freezing cold – water and other non-alcoholic drinks. Staff need to take regular breaks out of the sun.

## **APS resources**

View the APS skin cancer webinar at:  
<https://www.aps.org.uk/product/skin-cancer-awareness>



## Further Information & Support

- British Skin Foundation: <https://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk>
- Cancer Research UK: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org>
- HSE: Workplace Health and Safety: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf>
- HSE: Outdoor Working: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/outdoor.htm>
- HSE: Keep your top on: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg147.pdf>
- HSE: Sun Protection: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg337.pdf>
- MacMillan Cancer Support: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk>
- Skcin -Karen Clifford Skin Cancer Charity <https://www.skcin.org>
- TUC: working outdoors <https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/working-outdoors-heat-know-your-rights>
- TUC: Too hot to work <https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/it-too-hot-work>