

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
DIVISION OF SAFETY AND HEALTH

"SAFETY TIPS"
FOR COMPLYING WITH
THE NEW YORK STATE SUN SAFETY LAW

What is the New York State Public Employee Sun Safety Law?

The "New York State Public Employee Sun Safety Law" was enacted on August 18, 2006 as an amendment to Section 218-a of the New York State Labor Law. The law requires New York State public employers to provide sun safety information to state employees who spend more than a total of 5 hours per week outdoors. The law is effective November 14, 2006.

As enacted the law states:

*** §218-a. Sun safety education for state employees. 1. Any state employee who spends more than a total of five hours per week outdoors shall be provided information about (a) the potential dangers of diseases caused by over-exposure of the sun, such as skin cancer, (b) the existence of available protections and their proper uses, and (c) any other information necessary to afford an employee his or her best opportunity to protect themselves from the sun. 2. An employer of any employee subject to subdivision one of this section shall ensure that any necessary information is given to each employee for his or her use during their employment, at no cost to the employee. 3. The commissioner, in consultation with the commissioner of education, shall determine the form and content of the information supplied to the state employees who are subject to the provisions of this section.*

*** The effective date of this law is November 14, 2006***

The following information, which includes excerpts from NIOSH, CDC and OSHA will assist public employers in complying with the provisions of this sun safety law. New York State agency public employers must ensure that all state employees who spend more than 5 hours outdoors per work week as a part of their job function have access to sun safety protection information. You will also find useful information regarding cold weather protection which can also be provided to employees, although it is not a requirement of this law.

What should public employers do to protect state employees that may be exposed to climate hazards?

Climate hazards from heat, UV light from the sun and cold can pose a serious threat to health. Such threats can usually be easily addressed by recognizing the hazards and taking some simple steps to minimize or avoid these hazards. Employers should perform a workplace risk assessment to determine if climate hazards exist and if such hazards will place employees at unreasonable risks. If necessary, employers should take proper precautions and/or provide employees with reasonable protective measures to

ensure their safety. Contact the nearest PESH Office if you require assistance in performing a risk assessment to comply with this law.

Albany	(518) 457-5508	Rochester	(585) 258-4570
Binghamton	(607) 721-8211	Syracuse	(315) 479-3212
Buffalo	(716) 847-7133	Utica	(315) 793-2258
Garden City	(516) 228-3970	White Plains	(914) 997-9514
New York City	(212) 352-6116		

What is your risk from exposure to Ultraviolet Radiation (UV) from the Sun?

Employees who work outside in the sun are more at risk to skin exposures that may include blemishes, sun freckles and wrinkles. Continued exposure to sun over time can cause damaged skin to become cancerous.

Three different types of skin cancer are linked to sunlight exposure. Both basal cell cancer (the most common) and squamous cell cancer are usually treatable and totally cured if caught in time. Malignant melanoma is rarer, but also more likely to be fatal if treatment is delayed. Most of the 10,000 Americans who die from skin cancer each year are victims of malignant melanoma.

The risk of developing skin cancer increases with the amount of time over the years you spend without protection in the sun and the intensity of the sun's rays during exposure. Intensity is greater in the summer from 10 am to 2 pm at higher altitudes. Work surfaces, such as metal roofing, concrete, etc, can also reflect up to 50 percent of the sun's radiation which intensifies exposure.

How can you reduce your risk to UV exposure?

The easiest way to reduce UV risk is to reduce your direct exposure to the sun. You can do this by wearing protective clothing, such as a brim hat, long pants and long sleeved shirt. You can also use protective sunscreens. Use a sunscreen with a SPF (skin protection factor) of at least 15, and also one that is water-resistant, so it can withstand humidity and sweat. Avoid products such as baby oil, cocoa butter or skin oils which do not protect against sunburn.

In addition to reducing your exposure, examine yourself regularly. Check your skin for danger signs, including any wound, sore or patch of skin that won't heal or constantly scales or any growing lump, particularly if it is brown or bluish in color. Also check for moles that grow, or change shape or color. If anything looks suspicious get a medical opinion - sooner rather than later. Also advise your employer of any sun related condition or medical diagnosis.

The following OSHA fact sheet contains useful information for employees.

Protecting Yourself in the Sun

Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which causes premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, cataracts, and skin cancer. The amount of damage from UV exposure depends on the strength of the light, the length of exposure and whether the skin is protected.

There are no safe UV rays or safe suntans.

Skin Cancer

Sun exposure at any age can cause skin cancer. Be especially careful in the sun if you burn easily, spend a lot of time outdoors, or have any of the following physical features:

Numerous, irregular or large moles.

Freckles.

Fair skin.

Blond, red or light brown hair.

Self-Examination

It's important to examine your body monthly because skin cancers detected early can almost always be cured. The most important warning sign is a spot on the skin that is changing in size, shape or color during a period of 1 month to 1 or 2 years.

Skin cancers often take the following forms:

Pale, wax-like, pearly nodules.

Red, scaly, sharply outlined patches.

Sores that don't heal.

Small, mole-like growths—melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer.

If you find such unusual skin changes, see a health care professional immediately.

What is your risk from working in cold weather?

Cold stress or hypothermia can affect employees who are not sufficiently protected against cold. The cold may result naturally from weather conditions or be created artificially, as in refrigerated environments.

Cold is a physical hazard in many outdoor workplaces. When the body is unable to warm itself, serious cold-related illnesses and injuries may occur that could lead to permanent tissue damage or worse.

Typical workplaces that are prone to cold, wet and/or windy conditions include: roofs; open or unheated cabs; bridges or other projects near large bodies of water; large steel structures that retain cold or are exposed to cold; high buildings open to the wind; and refrigerated rooms, vessels, and containers.

Your body tries to maintain an internal (core) temperature of approximately 98.6°F (37°C) by reducing heat loss and increasing heat production. Under cold conditions, blood vessels in skin, arms and legs constrict, decreasing blood flow to extremities. This minimizes cooling of the blood and keeps critical internal organs warm. At very low temperatures, however, reducing blood flow to the extremities can result in lower skin temperature and higher risk of frostbite.

What other RISK FACTORS are associated with cold injury?

Various medical conditions such as heart disease, asthma/bronchitis, diabetes and vibration/white finger disease can increase the risk of cold injury. Check with your health practitioner to learn whether medications you are taking could also have adverse effects in a cold environment.

How do you protect against cold-related risks?

The best protection against cold-related health risks is to be aware and be prepared. Workers should recognize the signs and symptoms of overexposure to cold in both themselves and other co-workers. Pain in the extremities may be the first warning sign. Any worker shivering severely should come in out of the cold.

General Employee Protective Measures in cold weather:

- Ensure that wind-chill factor is understood by workers, especially those working on bridges or out in the open on high buildings.
- Ensure that workers are medically fit to work in excessive cold, especially those subject to the risk factors highlighted above.
- Make sure that workers understand the importance of high-caloric foods when working in cold environments. Warm sweet drinks and soups will serve to maintain caloric intake and fluid volume. Coffee should be discouraged in cold conditions because it increases water loss and blood flow to extremities.
- Personnel working in isolated cold environments, whether indoors or outdoors, should have backup for monitoring purposes. Also, if applicable, employees should use shelters or other protected areas at regular intervals.
- Warm drinks and regular breaks are beneficial under extremely cold working conditions.

Select protective clothing to suit the cold, the job, and the level of physical activity.

- Wear several layers of clothing rather than one thick layer. Air captured between layers acts as an insulator.
- Wear synthetic fabrics such as polypropylene next to the skin because these whisk away sweat. Clothing should not restrict flexibility.
- If conditions are wet as well as cold, ensure that the outer clothing worn is waterproof or at least water-repellent. Wind-resistant fabrics may also be required under some conditions.
- At air temperatures of 2°C (35.6°F) or less, workers whose clothing gets wet for any reason will need an immediate change of clothing and may need treatment from hypothermia.

- Encourage the use of hats and hoods to prevent heat loss from the head and to protect ears. Balaclavas or other face covers may also be necessary under certain conditions.
 - Tight-fitting footwear restricts blood flow. Footwear should be large enough to allow wearing either one thick or two thin pairs of socks. Wearing too many socks can tighten fit and harm rather than help.
 - Workers who get hot while working should open their jackets but keep hats and gloves on.
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