



Infrastructure Projects Southern Toolbox Talk

Working in the sun

16 June 2017

The sun is dangerous...



If you work outdoors for a long time your skin could be exposed to more sun than is healthy for you.

In the short term, even mild reddening of the skin from sun exposure is a sign of damage. Sunburn can blister the skin and

make it peel. In the longer term too much sun speeds up ageing of the skin, making it leathery, mottled and wrinkled. The most serious effect is an increased chance of developing skin cancer.

What are the dangers?

The danger from sunlight, which is caused by the ultraviolet rays, includes the following:

In the short term:

- Sun burn causing the skin to peel
- Mild reddening of the skin or a sun tan which is a sign of skin damage.

In the longer term:

- An increased chance of developing skin cancer
- Too much sunlight that will speed up ageing of your skin
- Skin becoming leathery, mottled and wrinkled.

Could you be more at risk?

Some people are more prone to skin cancer and developing health problems due to extreme sunlight than others. This includes those with:

- A serious chronic condition, especially heart or breathing problems
- Fair skin colour
- Moles or freckled skin that reddens quickly in the sun
- Red or fair hair and coloured eyes.



Always keep hydrated

Check your skin

It is important to check your skin at least once a month if you have had exposure to sunlight, to look for signs of skin cancer.

Signs can include:

- Growth of moles and skin
- Moles that are growing, bleeding or changing in appearance
- Scabby spots and sores that do not clear
- Skin discolouration.

If the skin does not improve in four weeks you must seek medical advice.



Health and Wellbeing

How do I protect myself in the heat?

- Plan your day- carry out more strenuous works during coolest parts of the day
- Walk and work in the shade as much as possible
- Take frequent short breaks, in a shaded cool area
- Stay hydrated- drink plenty of water
- If possible wear loose and lightweight clothing
- Always use sunscreen to all areas of your skin and reapply regularly throughout the day. Look for a sun protection factor of at least SPF15
- Avoid eating large meals before working in hot environments
- Report any medications that can affect you working in hot environments.

Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke

Tasks that involve high air temperatures, exposure to radiant heat sources, high humidity or direct physical contact with hot objects are most likely to induce heat stress.

Heat stress occurs when the body is unable to cool itself through sweating. The most common heat-induced illnesses are heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Heat exhaustion symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Light-headedness
- Weakness
- Mood changes such as irritability, confusion, or the inability to think straight.
- Upset stomach
- Vomiting
- Fainting or passing out
- Pale and clammy skin.

If left untreated, heat exhaustion could progress to heat stroke, and possible death.

Heat stroke symptoms include:

- Dry, pale skin with no sweating
- Hot, red skin that looks sunburned
- Mood changes such as irritability, confusion, or the inability to think straight
- Seizures or fits
- Unconsciousness with no response.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency call the emergency services!

Steps to treat heat stress:

- Keep cool in a shaded area to rest
- Loosen or remove any heavy clothing
- Drink water
- If you feel dizzy or light headed, lay down and raise your legs 6-8 inches
- Apply a wet cloth to your skin, cool yourself with a fan and spray with a mist of water.
- If symptoms do not improve call 999 for help immediately.

Did you know?

Caffeine, alcohol, food and drinks that are high in sugar work against the body in high temperatures. It is best to keep hydrated drinking water.



Remember:

This and other toolbox talks can be downloaded from:

www.southernshield.co.uk