

# HAZARD ALERT

CPWR  
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

# Skin Cancer



## Am I in Danger?

Working outside for all or part of the day exposes you to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun, even when it's cloudy outside. Over time, exposure to UV radiation permanently damages your skin and can cause skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer. In 2018, it is estimated that more than 90,000 people will be diagnosed with and 9,000 will die from melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. Cases of melanoma are on the rise, and many of those diagnosed are expected to be construction workers.<sup>1,2</sup>

**Fortunately, skin cancer is easy to prevent!**

### Know What to Look For

Examine your body from head-to-toe every month. Skin cancer that is detected early is easier to treat and more likely to be cured. Look for these warning signs:

- ▶ A new or existing mole that has an irregular border (ragged, notched, or blurred edges).
- ▶ A new or existing mole that is not symmetrical (one half doesn't match the other), or whose color is not the same throughout.
- ▶ Moles that are bigger than a pencil eraser.
- ▶ Itchy or painful moles.
- ▶ A bump, patch, sore, or growth that bleeds, oozes, or crusts and doesn't heal.

**If you detect any changes in your skin, see a dermatologist right away.**



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### Did You Know?

- ▶ **Anyone can get skin cancer, regardless of their skin tone.** A common misconception is that people with darker skin tones will not get skin cancer. While skin cancer is more common in people with fairer skin, it often goes unnoticed in people with darker skin until it is at a more serious stage.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ **More women develop melanoma than men before age 50; however, by age 65, the occurrence in men is double that of women, and by age 80 it is triple.<sup>1</sup>**
- ▶ **Melanoma is one of the most common forms of cancer in people younger than 30.<sup>4</sup>**
- ▶ **The likelihood of developing melanoma doubles if you have had more than five sunburns.<sup>5</sup>**

## Protecting Your Skin is Easy...

### 1 Wear Sunscreen

- ▶ Avoid getting sunburned. Always wear sunscreen when working outside — even for a short period of time.
- ▶ Water, snow, sand, concrete, and metal reflect and intensify UV radiation and increase your chance of getting sunburned.
- ▶ Use a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. A broad-spectrum sunscreen protects against UVA and UVB radiation.
- ▶ Reapply every two hours, or after excessive sweating.



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### 2 Wear Protective Clothing

- ▶ Wear tightly-woven and loose-fitting long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- ▶ Protect the back of your neck with a cloth flap designed to attach to your hard hat.
- ▶ Ask your employer for safety glasses that also provide protection against UVA and UVB radiation. They can be clear. The lens color has nothing to do with UV protection.



### 3 Stay in the Shade

- ▶ If possible, complete outdoor tasks earlier or later in the day to reduce sun exposure.
- ▶ Stay in the shade as much as possible and when taking breaks. The sun is strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- ▶ If possible, build temporary shade structures in areas where you are working.



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### To learn more visit:

- ▶ **OSHA**  
<https://tinyurl.com/OSHA-Skin-Cancer>
- ▶ **NIOSH**  
<https://tinyurl.com/NIOSH-Sun-Exposure>
- ▶ **The Skin Cancer Foundation**  
[www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org)
- ▶ **American Cancer Society**  
<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/skin-cancer.html>

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### If you think you are in danger:

Contact your supervisor.  
Contact your union.

Call OSHA

**1-800-321-OSHA**

To receive copies of this Hazard Alert and cards on other topics call

**301-578-8500** or visit  
**www.cpwrr.com**

Sources: 1) American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts and Figures 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/Cancer-Facts-Figures-2018> 2) Rushton, L. & Hutchings, S. (2017). The burden of occupationally-related cutaneous malignant melanoma in Britain due to solar radiation. *Br J Cancer* 116: 536-539. doi:10.1038/bjc.2016.437 3) The Skin Cancer Foundation. Dark Skin Tones and Skin Cancer: What You Need to Know. <https://tinyurl.com/Skin-Color-and-Skin-Cancer> 4) American Cancer Society. Cancers That Develop in Young Adults. <https://tinyurl.com/cancers-in-young-adults> 5) Pfahler, A., Kölmel, K.F., & Gefeller, O. (2001) Timing of excessive ultraviolet radiation and melanoma: epidemiology does not support the existence of a critical period of high susceptibility to solar ultraviolet radiation-induced melanoma. *Br J Dermatol*, 144(3), 471-475. <https://tinyurl.com/UV-Radiation-and-Melanoma>