### 6.05.7 Sun Protection

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Introduction

Bega Valley Shire Council (BVSC) recognises its responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees. In order to meet the requirements of the Work Health & Safety Act, BVSC is committed to. This policy is designed to ensure the protection of staff and contractors who regularly work outdoors by reducing their exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) and thereby reducing the potential incidence of skin cancer. This policy has been developed in line with recommendations specified in the Sun Safety At Work Policy developed by the Cancer Council of NSW and Union Safe.

Glossary of terms

<table>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<td>Ultra Violet Radiation (UVR)</td>
<td>UVR comes from the sun, it is influenced by latitude, time of day and time of year. Levels are highest between 10am – 2pm (11am – 3pm during daylight saving). It cannot be felt on the skin, is present even on cloudy days, is not related to temperature and is present all year round.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basal Cell Carcinoma</td>
<td>BCC is the most common and least dangerous type of skin cancer. BCC is usually found on the head, neck and upper torso. It appears as a lump or scaling area that is red or pearly in colour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squamous Cell Carcinoma</td>
<td>SCC appears on parts of the body that are most often exposed to the sun. SCC is not as dangerous as melanoma but may spread to other parts of the body if not treated. Any spot that appears on the lips or ears should be seen by a GP immediately. SCC appears as a thickened, red scaly spot that ulcerates and bleeds easily.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melanoma</td>
<td>Melanoma is the most dangerous form of skin cancer. It can be fatal if it is not detected and treated early. Melanoma appears as a new spot, or an existing spot, freckle or mole that changes colour, size or shape. Melanoma can grow anywhere on the body, even parts rarely exposed to the sun. Treated early, 95% of melanoma’s are cured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘SPF’</td>
<td>Sun Protection Factor</td>
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<tr>
<td>UVR</td>
<td>Ultra Violet Radiation</td>
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Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Bega Valley Shire Council who work in an environment where they are exposed to ultraviolet radiation. This includes casual, temporary and permanent staff, volunteers, and participants in work experience programs, or other job schemes.

Objectives

The aim of this procedure is to minimise the exposure of employees to Ultraviolet (UV) Radiation, who as a result of their duties spend the majority of their working day in an outdoor environment.

References and associated documents

It is vital that all field/outdoor tasks are planned in order to eliminate exposure to hazardous UV radiation. If it is not possible to eliminate exposure the following guidelines should be followed:

Work in the Shade

Where possible work in the shade, where no shade exists, determine if a temporary shade cover be implemented. Whenever possible; staff should plan outdoor tasks early in the morning or later in the afternoon when UV radiation levels are lower. Where possible rotate work tasks to reduce exposure to the sun.

Slip on some sun protective clothing

Cover as much skin as possible. Wear loose fitting long pants or long shorts and a long sleeved shirt with a collar made from a close weave, breathable fabric with a UPF rating of at least 40.

Slap on a hat

To be effective, a hat should shade your face, ears and neck. A broad brimmed hat must have a brim of at least 8cm. A bucket style hat must have a deep crown, angled brim of 6cm and sit low on the head and covers the ears. Legionnaire style hats must have a flap that covers the neck and joins to the sides of the front peak. If wearing a hard hat, use a brim attachment.

From May 31 until August 31, peaked hats may be worn when working outdoors. Outside of these dates, the broad brim hat must be worn when working outdoors and exposed to the sun for a period exceeding 20 minutes.

Peaked hats may be worn when working in a sheltered area or when the potential for sun exposure is less than 20 minutes, for example when transitioning from a vehicle to a worksite.

Note:

Only BVSC branded peaked hats are acceptable under this procedure.

Slide on some sunglasses

Be aware that your eyes can also be damaged by UV radiation. Wear close fitting, wrap around style safety sunglasses.

Slop on some sunscreen

Sunscreen does not offer 100% protection from UVR and should always be used in conjunction with other protective measures such as clothing, hats and sunglasses. Sunscreen will be made easily accessible for all employees required to work outdoors.
Sunscreen provided will be broad-spectrum with a SPF of 30+.

Apply a minimum of SPF 30+ sunscreen generously to clean, dry skin before going out into the sun. Reapply every two hours or more often when sweating.

**Note:**
No sunscreen provides complete protection; do not rely on sunscreen alone.

**Consult the UV Index for the day**

The bureau of Meteorology issues a Sun Smart UV Alert when, the UV index is forecast to be 3 or above, a level that can damage your skin and lead to skin cancer. The higher the Index value, the greater the potential there is for damage to occur to your skin. The UV Alert shows the time of the day people need to be SunSmart. The Sun Smart UV alert appears on the weather page of all Australian daily newspapers and is available on the Bureau of Meteorology website [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) and search for “SunSmart UV Alert”.

The time period displayed in the Sun Smart UV Alert tells you when to use sun protection while working outdoors. Extra care should be taken between 10am – 3pm.

Regularly conduct Skin Cancer Checks

You need to check your skin for;

- Any new freckles, moles, sunspots or unhealing sores
- A spot that’s different from others around it
- A spot or mole that has changed colour, size or shape

Check your skin regularly or ask someone else to check areas you can’t see.

Act quickly if you see a suspicious spot. If in doubt, get it checked out, see your GP, as soon as possible.
Heat Illness

Heat illness covers a range of medical conditions that can arise when the body is unable to properly cope with working in heat. Signs and symptoms of heat illness include feelings of sickness, nausea, dizziness, weakness, clumsiness, collapse and convulsions. Anyone with these signs or symptoms should seek immediate first aid / medical attention.

Other health and safety problems caused by hot working conditions include:

- Sweaty hands causing a loss of grip while handling objects, controls etc.
- Trips and falls occurring due to fainting or fatigue.
- Mental and or physical fatigue leading to errors and mistakes.
- Not using PPE e.g. ear muffs, safety glasses, hard hats etc. due to increased discomfort when it is hot.
- Cutting corners due to work fatigue or discomfort.

Personal Protective Clothing

All clothing provided by Council will have the objective of providing maximum sun protection. The selection of appropriate protective clothing will take into account both the need to block out the UV and the need to reduce the effects of heat. Employees who work outdoors will be provided with the following personal protective clothing and equipment, which must be worn when working outdoors:

- Long sleeved shirt with collar, made from a close weave, breathable fabric with a UPF rating of at least 50+.
- Long trousers or knee length shorts, made from a close weave; breathable fabric with a UPF rating of at least 50+.
- Hat with a broad brim (at least 8 cm) and or brim attachment with neck flaps for hard hats.
- Bucket style hats with a brim of at least 6cm or legionnaire style caps with the flaps that protect the ears and the back of the neck are also acceptable. Note: Approved hats must be worn at all times when outdoors, if the forecast UV index is above 2, as published by the Bureau of Meteorology on its website, www.bom.gov.au under the UV Sun protection link, the free UV Australia App for mobile phones, tablets etc. or in the local daily newspaper. Only hats that meet Council requirements are acceptable. Hats with a gauze or mesh section that allow UVR to penetrate through to the head or peaked trucker / baseball style caps with no neck or side protection are not acceptable under this policy.
- Safety Sunglasses complying with AS1337 and 1338 (or clip-ons for employees who wear prescription glasses). Sunglasses should be glare resistant, lightweight & fit closely to the face.
- Sunscreen – broad spectrum and water resistant, with a SPF rating of 30+. Sunscreen should be applied generously to all areas of exposed skin at least 20 minutes before you go outside, and reapplied every two hours.
- Lip balm - broad spectrum and water resistant, with a SPF rating of 30+. Lip balm should be applied to the lips before you go outside, and reapplied every two hours.
Responsibilities

Council Responsibility

Acknowledge the extent and importance of skin cancer awareness at work and provide employees with sufficient resources to reduce the risk of exposure to UVR.

Managers / Supervisors / Team Leaders

Each manager/supervisor/team leader is accountable under the Act, for implementing this policy in their area of responsibility and must ensure that staff under their control is educated in the hazards of working in an outdoor environment.

The following responsibilities apply to all managers, supervisors and team leaders:

- Ensure all employees under your area of control are educated in the hazards of working in an outdoor environment.
- Ensure employees are issued with and or wear appropriate clothing that provides adequate protection against UV exposure.
- Review work patterns during the summer months to reduce the exposure of individuals to UV radiation and heat stress such as:
  a. Start and finish times
  b. Changing work patterns during the hottest part of the day (11am – 2pm)
  c. Ensure employees have access to drinking water and encourage the regular drinking of water to prevent dehydration.
  d. Encourage the rotation of tasks to reduce an individual’s exposure.

Employees

Under Work, Health and Safety legislation, workers while at work, shall, as regards to any requirement imposed in the interests of health, safety and welfare on their employer; co-operate with the employer so far as is necessary to enable compliance with that requirement. Additionally BVSC employees must:

- Must wear the clothing, hats, safety sunglasses and sunscreen supplied and are not to alter the supplied clothing in any way, other than to ensure that it fits correctly.
- Attempt to maximize the use of any shade provided by trees, buildings and other structures at the worksite.
- Administration staff required to work outdoors and therefore exposed to UVR for more than 20 mins at a time or two hours or more in a day will be required to wear suitable protective clothing as described in this procedure.

Staff seeking further information should contact their immediate Supervisor or the WHS Officer.
Sun protection within Council Vehicles

Most modern passenger vehicles come standard with a level of factory tinting on the side and rear windows. In addition to this:

- All purchased commercial vehicles and plant will be fitted with an aftermarket window tinting and air conditioning on a needs basis.
- The additional tinting blocks out 99% of the UV, reduces the heat inside the vehicle/cabin between 50-75% and reduces the glare by around 50-55%. These reductions only apply if the windows are up. Employees are encouraged to refrain from driving for any length of time with the window down or wear long sleeve shirts or apply sun screen regularly as required.
- All staff are to be informed of the hazards of working outdoors and the contents of this procedure as part of the induction process.
- Further training and educational material is available through the Cancer Council of New South Wales; [www.cancercouncil.org.au](http://www.cancercouncil.org.au)

Consultation

Bega Valley Shire Council will consult with its workers in the ongoing review, development and implementation of the Sun Protection Procedure, using the forum of the Work Health and Safety Committee as its first recourse in such consultation. The committee supports all aspects of council’s WH&S policies and programmes, through the process of joint consultation.