

Toolbox Talk: Sun Protection for Outdoor Workers

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Toolbox Talk Ref: Sun Protection

Page: 1 of 3

Purpose

To ensure operatives understand the risks associated with prolonged exposure to the sun and how to protect themselves when working outdoors.

Legal Duty

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers must assess risks and protect workers from health hazards including excessive exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

Why Sun Protection Matters

Outdoor workers such as window cleaners can be exposed to high levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Overexposure can increase the risk of skin cancer, heat stress and long term skin damage.

Who Is Most at Risk

- Workers who spend long periods outdoors
- People with pale skin, freckles or fair hair
- Workers with a family history of skin cancer
- Anyone exposed to strong sunlight for long periods

Signs of Sun Damage

- Sunburn or redness
- Dry or damaged skin
- Unusual moles or skin changes
- Heat exhaustion or dehydration

Protecting Yourself

- Apply sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) to exposed skin
- Reapply sunscreen regularly
- Wear long sleeves and protective clothing where possible
- Wear a hat with a brim to protect the face and neck
- Wear UV protective sunglasses

Working Safely in the Sun

- Take breaks in shaded areas
- Drink plenty of water
- Avoid working in direct sun where possible during peak UV hours
- Monitor colleagues for signs of heat exhaustion

Insert Company Logo Here
Insert Company Name & Address Here
Toolbox Talk Ref: Sun Protection
Page: 3 of 3

WCA Member Disclaimer

This document is provided by the Window Cleaners Association (WCA) as general guidance for members. It does not replace workplace risk assessments, training, or professional health and safety advice. Employers remain responsible for ensuring compliance with current UK legislation and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

Recommended HSE Guidance

HSE – Sun safety at work: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/working-in-the-heat.htm> HSE – Outdoor workers and UV exposure guidance