



**Sun Protection  
Month**

## eSafetyLine

### **The 411 on Sunscreen**

Experts agree that the best way to treat skin cancers of all kinds is to not get any in the first place. Skin cancers develop in skin cells that have been damaged by the sun, specifically the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation. The best way to prevent developing a skin cancer is to protect the skin from coming in contact with the UV rays by staying out of the sun. For those in construction, this is just not possible. Another good way is to prevent contact by covering up with long pants and long sleeved shirts. This isn't really practical for those in warm climates. For those that must be in the sun and don't want to suffer heat stroke a sunscreen may be a good solution but there are SO many choices and combinations that choosing the best match can be difficult. Following are some commonly asked questions to help clarify the world of sunscreens.

- What is a sunscreen? A sunscreen is a chemical that helps prevent UV radiation from reaching the skin. There are 2 types of UV rays that can damage skin and potentially cause skin cancers; UVA and UVB. UVB is most responsible for causing sunburn and ultimately skin cancer and UVA affect the skin more deeply causing wrinkling, leathery, sagging and have recently been found to cause skin cancer as well.
- What is SPF? SPF is the Sun Protection Factor, a measure of a sunscreen's ability to prevent UVA and UVB from damaging the skin. Most simply: if it takes 20 minutes in the sun for your unprotected skin to start turning red, using an SPF of 15 will prevent reddening for 15 times longer or about 5 hours. HOWEVER, NO sunscreen will stay effective for more than 2 hours without reapplication. Reapplying the sunscreen is crucial for it to be effective.

- Who should use sunscreen? Everyone over the age of 6 months should use a sunscreen daily, even if you work indoors. For those in the construction industry out in the sun all day, it is even more important to use sunscreen each and every day.
- What kind should I use? The average construction worker should use a sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB radiation. Be sure to choose an SPF of at least 30, this will block 97% of all incoming UVB rays. Another good choice is one that is water resistant or very water resistant. These are more difficult to sweat off and less likely to drip into the eyes. Any sunscreen, water resistant or not, MUST be reapplied every 2 hours to ensure continuous protection.
- How much sunscreen should I use? To be sure you get the full protection from the sunscreen; you need to apply 1 ounce or about a shot glass full to all exposed skin. Most people use about ¼ of that amount, which means the SPF that is actually protecting them is much less. Sunscreens should be applied about 30 minutes before going out in the sun and reapplied every 2 hours. If you sweat a lot you should reapply more often.

While the use of sunscreen may not completely prevent skin cancers, they will certainly help to minimize the damaging effects of the sun. When buying a sunscreen, remember you get what you pay for. Buy a higher quality sunscreen and be sure to check that it blocks BOTH UVA and UVB rays. You wouldn't buy the cheapest hardhat or hearing protection and expect it to completely protect you. Think of the sunscreen as the newest PPE.

### **Discussion Questions**

How much sunscreen should be used at each application?

How often should you reapply your sunscreen?

# MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

TOPICS ADDRESSED: \_\_\_\_\_

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## EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

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EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

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ACTION TAKEN: \_\_\_\_\_

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Supervisor's Signature

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Date

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Safety Coordinator's Signature

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Date