

 UNSW THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES	Outdoor Workers Guideline
UNSW Guideline	
Control number	OHS419
Linked UNSW policy	This procedure details actions and processes pursuant to the UNSW OHS Policy
Responsible Officer	Director, Human Resources
Authorisation	Director, Human Resources
Contact Officer	Manager, OHS and Worker's Compensation
Effective Date	1 January 2007
Superseded Documents	This guideline replaces Outdoor Workers Guideline v1, March 2005
Review	This guideline will be reviewed in accordance with the OHS Management System Review Procedure.
File Number	TRIM 2007/1226

1. Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to ensure that for outdoor personnel, their work is organised such that their exposure to solar radiation and heat stress hazards is minimised.

2. Scope

This Guideline applies to all UNSW staff and students (and visiting staff and students) who work outdoors.

3. Definitions

No definitions are needed.

4. Guidelines

What are the general Heat and Radiation Hazards from working outdoors?

- de-hydration;
- sunburn to skin and eyes;
- skin lesions/disorders eg solar keratoses;
- heat stress;
- increased risk of cataracts from UV radiation;
- skin cancer;
- other specific hazards related to the task eg. hot surfaces (task risk assessment to identify).

What measures can be taken to reduce exposure?

1. Scheduling work outside the hottest time of day;
2. Performing work under shade where possible;
3. Taking scheduled rest breaks in times of extreme heat;
4. Drinking fluids;
5. Using sunscreen, hats with neck flaps, approved sunglasses, loose fitting cotton long sleeved shirts, long trousers or knee length shorts.

1. Scheduling of Work

Outdoor heavy manual work (eg. shovelling) can put extra stress on the body particularly when the temperature reaches 30°C. In these cases work should be scheduled so that it is either performed under shade, indoors or is physically less demanding. (eg. mowing, moving hoses).

Staff should also be informed of the need to protect themselves on days when it is cloudy or when exposure to the sun may not be as obvious such as working near reflective surfaces such as water and bright buildings. Similar scheduling and sun protection arrangements need to be made under these circumstances.

Staff and supervisors should discuss the tasks to be performed and organise the work schedule around the temperature.

2. Providing shade

Where possible, natural shade from trees, buildings and other structures should be used. If there is no natural shade, canopies, tents or other easily erected shade structures should be erected. Vehicles and machinery such as tractors and mowers may be able to be fitted with shade canopies.

Vehicles should be fitted with air conditioned cabs where possible.

3. Rest Breaks

Workers performing manual work during hot weather should take regular breaks as needed. How often they should take a break and for how long will depend on the physical nature of the task and their own physical health and fitness level. The break should also provide an opportunity to keep up their fluid intake. New or inexperienced workers may need to take more frequent rest breaks until they become acclimatised to the conditions.

The length of time needed for rest breaks can also depend on whether rest breaks can be taken in a cooled or air-conditioned building, in which case shorter rest breaks may be adequate.

Rest breaks ideally should be taken in a cool place as close as possible to the place where the work is being carried out. If the work is some distance from their base, the staff should be allowed to go inside the nearest cool building (air conditioned building if possible) or shaded area to take a rest and have cool drinks. They should not have to walk a long distance nor rest in a hot, unshaded location. SHORT work periods followed by SHORT rest breaks are better than long work periods followed by long rest breaks.

4. Drinking Fluids

Workers need to take regular cool drinks when working in the heat to replace sweat lost and avoid dehydration. When working at a distance from their base, they should take an insulated flask (provided by the University) for a handy supply of cool liquid, preferably water. Cool water dispensers should be provided in appropriate locations. An electrolyte replacement drink (eg. Gatorade) can also be taken if either the work or the temperature conditions or both are likely to cause excessive sweating.

5. Protection

Sunscreen, sunglasses and hats which have been approved by the local Occupational Health and Safety Committee, should be made available to all staff who are required to work outdoors. Students should be made aware that they themselves are responsible for providing their own protection. *The supervisor could carry some spare sets of such protection if possible as contingency.*

(a) Clothing

Recommended clothing for protection of the skin from UV light is loose-fitting and allows sweat to evaporate. Closely-woven fabrics of light colours are recommended. Cotton is the best fabric. Long-sleeve shirts and long trousers give good skin protection. The remaining exposed parts of the body should be protected by other means. Fingerless gloves offer good protection to the hands for working outdoors.

(b) Hats

The recommended hat is wide brimmed having an all-round brim at least 10 cm wide and is made of natural fibres in a light colour, for example a white "sailing" hat. A neck flap should be fitted to the hat to protect the neck.

(c) Sunscreens

The recommended sunscreen cream is a broad spectrum, waterproof type with a high sun protection factor (15+). For maximum effectiveness, sunscreens should be applied to clean dry skin 15 minutes before going out into the sun. They should be wiped on rather than rubbed into the skin, and they should be reapplied at least every 2 hours. When profuse sweating occurs, sunscreen creams may need to be reapplied more often. Lip protection is also important so an SPF 15+ lip balm should be regularly applied to the lips.

(d) Sunglasses

The recommended sunglasses protect against UV light penetration at the front and sides of the face and also give impact protection. Tinting helps reduce glare. Safety glasses should meet the requirements of Australian Standard 1337. *You should double check with the supplier that both the frames **and** the lenses are manufactured to this standard (sometimes only the frames are).* The risk assessment for the task should also consider whether there are projectile hazards which may require a greater level of impact resistance than normal sun glasses.

Health Monitoring

Initial health checks on commencement of employment then regular health checks may be arranged to monitor skin damage. Early detection of skin damage is essential and more readily treated than progressed damage. Refer also to UNSW Pre Employment Health Assessment Policy document.

5. Legal & Policy Framework

OHS Regulation 2001

5.1 Associated Documents

OHS Policy

6. Evaluation and History

This guideline will be reviewed in accordance with the OHS Management System Review Procedure.

6.1 Modifications

Version	Date	Author	Approval	Sections modified	Details of amendments
0.1	01/11/2006	Martina Lavin	Director Human Resources	All	Formatting changes only. Released for consultation.
2.0	01/01/2007	Martina Lavin	Director Human Resources		No changes from consultation process