

# Ultraviolet Radiation (UV) Exposure and Outdoor Workers



**58%**

of workers report that they often or always wear a hat

**56%**

wear protective clothing

**54%**

use protective eyewear

**29%**

use sunscreen

**44%**

will seek shade

**38%**

attempt to avoid the sun while working

Carex Canada, a Canadian database of known occupational and environmental carcinogens, indicates that approximately 1.5 million Canadians and 53,000 Nova Scotians are exposed to UV radiation as a part of their job. This same database has prioritized solar UV radiation as group A (immediate high priority) in the occupational setting.

The national sun survey conducted in 2006 reported that 29% of Atlantic Canadians aged 16 – 64 have occupations that require them to work outdoors. Of these outdoor workers 41% spend four or more hours outdoors daily. These statistics suggest a significant number of Nova Scotians may be subject to overexposure of UV radiation, the number one risk factor for skin cancer, while at work.

## National Statistics

Analysis of the National Sun Survey and other studies indicate that Canadian workers practice no or sub-optimal sun safety.

- 58% of workers report that they often or always wear a hat
- 56% wear protective clothing
- 54% use protective eyewear
- 29% use sunscreen
- 44% will seek shade
- 38% attempt to avoid the sun while working

When asked why they did not practice sun safety strategies the top responses given by Canadian workers were:

- they forget it
- it's inconvenient
- they want a tan or are not concerned about sun safety

These statistics indicate that occupational education around sun safety is an essential first step to improving sun safety, however, only 21% of Canadians considered their employer to be a source of information for sun safety.

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## Nova Scotia Provincial Legislation

Section 12 (2) of the Nova Scotia Occupational Safety General Regulations states:



Where a person is exposed to a hazard that may injure the skin, an employer shall ensure that adequate protection is worn or used".

Although UV radiation is not named explicitly there is abundant evidence to support it as an occupational hazard that may injure the skin.

An additional relevant section of this legislation (13.1) states that



Every employer shall take every precaution that is reasonable in the circumstances to:

- (a) ensure the health and safety of persons at or near the workplace;
- (d) ensure that the employees, and particularly the supervisors and foremen, are made familiar with any health or safety hazards that may be met by them at the workplace;
- (e) ensure that the employees are made familiar with the proper use of all devices, equipment and clothing required for their protection; and
- (f) conduct the employer's undertaking so that employees are not exposed to health or safety hazards as a result of the undertaking."

Guidance for implementing a UV safety program can emanate from the *Occupational Health and Safety Program* subsection of this same act which states 28(2) that



the program shall include:

- (e) a hazard identification program that includes;
  - (i) evaluation of the workplace to identify potential hazards,
  - (iii) procedures for ensuring the reporting and accountability of persons responsible for the correction of hazards and
  - (iv) identification of circumstances where hazards must be reported by the employer to the committee or representative, if any, and the procedure for doing so
- (f) a system for workplace occupational health and safety monitoring, prompt follow up and control of identified hazards
- (g) a system for the prompt investigation of hazardous occurrences to determine their causes and the actions needed to prevent recurrences."