



WORKING IN THE SUN POLICY

Version 1: July 2020

ABSTRACT

Peterlee Town Council provides this Working in the Sun Policy for employees as guidance for outdoor hot working conditions.

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Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided
and in greyscale.

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Introduction

A sunny day makes most of us feel good, but too much strong sunlight can be damaging to the skin. The problem is caused by ultraviolet – UV rays in strong sunlight. Grounds and Parks operatives work outdoors for a long time and may get more sun on their skin than is healthy for them. Further, other staff covering events on behalf of Peterlee Town Council may also be at risk from exposure to UV. Therefore, this policy applies to all Peterlee Town Council staff.

Dangers

In the short term: sunburn can blister your skin, make it sore and peel, but even mild reddening is a sign of skin damage.

In the long term: the most serious effect is an increased chance of skin cancer later in life. It is almost always easy to cure but it should be caught early. Too much sun will also speed up the ageing of your skin, making it leathery, mottled and wrinkled. In England and Wales around 35,000 new cases of skin cancer are registered every year. There are 1,600 deaths.

Some medicines, and contact with some chemicals used at work (such as dyes, wood preservatives, coal-tar and pitch products), can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight.

Who is at risk of skin cancer?

People with white skin are at most risk. Take particular care if you have:

- fair or freckled skin that does not tan, or burns before it tans;
- red or fair hair and light coloured eyes; and,
- a large number of moles - over 100 in young people, or over 50 in older people.

Should I protect myself?

Yes. You should be particularly careful while you are working out of doors in the summer in the three or four hours around the middle of the day. The sun is most intense at these times. Take your breaks in the shade, if possible, rather than staying out in the sun.

Don't get burned

Get to know how your skin reacts to sunlight. This will help you decide what precautions to take. Getting burned now may increase your chances of skin cancer many years later. Try to avoid the reddening that is the first sign of burning. The best protection is to shade your skin from the direct sunlight.

A suntan may give some protection against burning but does not eliminate the long term cancer risk; nor will it protect against premature ageing.

Clothing – PPE Issue

Ordinary clothing made from close-woven fabric, such as a long-sleeved work shirt and trousers, will stop most of the UVA. A cap with a drape to cover the back of your neck will protect against sunburn.

In this regard please consider this when ordering your uniform.

Keep your shirt on, especially while you are working around the middle of the day. Don't be tempted to take off your shirt - skin that hasn't seen the sun for months burns easily. You may also put yourself at additional risk by removing high visibility clothing. PPE that is provided by Peterlee Town Council should be worn at all times. If any member of staff requires additional items of clothing they should speak to their line manager.

Check your skin

The first warning sign is often a small scabby spot which does not clear after a few weeks. Look for changed or newly formed moles or any skin discoloration. It is normal for moles to grow until you are about 18 years old, but as an adult you should show your doctor any moles which grow or change.

If you notice any of these signs consult your own doctor. Explain that you have an outdoor job. Fortunately, most of these signs will be harmless, but medical checks may be needed to be sure. Even if a spot is cancerous, simple modern treatments can usually cure it and most don't spread to other parts of the body. The smaller the spot the easier it is to cure. So don't put off going to the doctor when you know you should.

If you have any kind of medical check-up tell the doctor that you have an outdoor job and ask if there are any suspicious signs on your skin.

Remember

- Keep your top on at all times.
- Wear a hat with a brim or a flap that covers the ears and the back of the neck.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, during your breaks and especially at lunch time.
- Use a high factor sunscreen of at least SPF30 on any exposed skin (everyone's skin is different so ensure that the type/brand is compatible with yours).
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.

Check your skin regularly for any unusual moles or spots. See a doctor promptly if you find anything that is changing in shape, size or colour, itching or bleeding. Each person is different and may require different clothing and/or sunscreen. Please speak with your line manager about obtaining the requisite equipment/product.

Author of Policy;	Corporate Services Manager
Date effective from;	July 2020
Policy review;	July 2023
Version Control;	V1