

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
DIVISION OF SAFETY AND HEALTH

**“SAFETY TIPS” FOR COMPLYING WITH THE NEW YORK
STATE SUN SAFETY LAW**

What is the New York State Public Employee Sun Safety Law?

The law requires New York State public employers to provide **sun safety information** to public employees who spend more than a total of 5 hours per week outdoors. The law became effective November 14, 2006. As enacted the law states:

“ §218-a. Sun safety education for state employees. 1. Any employee who spends more than a total of five hours per week outdoors shall be provided information about (a) the potential dangers of diseases caused by over-exposure of the sun, such as skin cancer, (b) the existence of available protections and their proper uses, and (c) any other information necessary to afford an employee his or her best opportunity to protect themselves from the sun. 2. An employer of any employee subject to subdivision one of this section shall ensure that any necessary information is given to each employee for his or her use during their employment, at no cost to the employee.*

What is your risk from exposure to Ultraviolet Radiation (UV) from the Sun?

Employees who work outside in the sun are more at risk to skin exposures that may include blemishes, sun freckles and wrinkles. Continued exposure to sun over time can cause damaged skin to become cancerous. Three different types of skin cancer are linked to sunlight exposure. Both basal cell cancer (the most common) and squamous cell cancer are usually treatable and totally cured if caught in time. Malignant melanoma is rarer, but also more likely to be fatal if treatment is delayed. Most of the 10,000 Americans who die from skin cancer each year are victims of malignant melanoma.

The risk of developing skin cancer increases with the amount of time over the years you spend without protection in the sun and the intensity of the sun's rays during exposure. Intensity is greater in the summer from 10 am to 2 pm at higher altitudes. Work surfaces, such as metal roofing, concrete, etc, can also reflect up to 50 percent of the sun's radiation which intensifies exposure.

How can you reduce your risk to UV exposure?

The easiest way to reduce UV risk is to reduce your direct exposure to the sun. You can do this by wearing protective clothing, such as a brim hat, long pants and long sleeved shirt. You can also use protective sunscreens. Use a sunscreen with a SPF (skin protection factor) of at least 15, and also one that is water-resistant, so it can withstand humidity and sweat. Avoid products such as baby oil, cocoa butter or skin oils which do not protect against sunburn.

In addition to reducing your exposure, examine yourself regularly. Check your skin for danger signs, including any wound, sore or patch of skin that won't heal or constantly scales or any growing lump, particularly if it is brown or bluish in color. Also check for moles that grow, or change shape or color. If anything looks suspicious get a medical opinion - sooner rather than later. Also advise your employer of any sun related condition or medical diagnosis.

Protecting Yourself in the Sun

Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which causes premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, cataracts, and skin cancer. The amount of damage from UV exposure depends on the strength of the light, the length of exposure and whether the skin is protected.

There are no safe UV rays or safe suntans.

Skin Cancer

Sun exposure at any age can cause skin cancer. Be especially careful in the sun if you burn easily, spend a lot of time outdoors, or have any of the following physical features:

- Numerous, irregular or large moles.
- Freckles.
- Fair skin.
- Blond, red or light brown hair.

Self-Examination

It's important to examine your body monthly because skin cancers detected early can almost always be cured. The most important warning sign is a spot on the skin that is changing in size, shape or color during a period of 1 month to 1 or 2 years. Skin cancers often take the following forms:

- Pale, wax-like, pearly nodules.
- Red, scaly, sharply outlined patches.
- Sores that don't heal.
- Small, mole-like growths – melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer.

If you find such unusual skin changes, see a health care professional immediately.

****NOTE**** The Town of North Elba is required to provide you with information enabling you to take appropriate action to protect yourself from sun damage. The Town is NOT required to provide you with protective gear (long-sleeve shirts, pants, safety glasses) or products (sunscreens or sunblocks).

SOURCE: NYS Department of Safety & Health.

Please contact Rose Van Wormer, Safety Coordinator, with any questions at 523-9516, ext. 117.