

POLICY ON PREVENTION OF OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE TO SOLAR RADIATION

13 April 1992

1. POLICY & SCOPE

1.1 The University Safety Policy is the enabling policy. The following statement is a specific requirement of that policy:

"The University recognises its obligation to take all reasonable precautions to protect the safety of its employees, students and visitors while they are on the premises."

1.2 Exposure to solar radiation is considered to be a major cause of skin cancer. These procedures are designed to prevent occupational skin cancer arising from the excessive exposure to solar ultraviolet (UV) radiation. For the purposes of these procedures, occupational exposure to the sun includes University employees and students undertaking the following in the course of University activities:

- outdoor work
- outdoor teaching sessions
- field trips and excursions

1.3 These procedures do not apply to the Landscaping Section, for which a separate code of practice has been developed.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Managers, Chairpersons and Supervisors are responsible for:

a) Ensuring that these procedures are implemented and followed in situations where employees or students are potentially exposed to excessive levels of solar UV radiation.

b) Ensuring that persons occupationally exposed to sunlight are aware of the risks and the appropriate control strategies.

3. PREVENTION STRATEGIES

3.1 The average peak intensity of solar UV radiation is at midday (1 pm during daylight saving), with most of the total daily UV being received between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm. UV radiation has the ability to reflect off water, sand, concrete, light coloured surfaces, and snow. Cloud cover can reduce UV levels to some extent, but over exposure can still occur.

3.2 The following prevention strategies, where practicable and in order of priority, shall apply at all times:

- a) Engineering controls such as using natural shade or working

indoors. Temporary shade can be provided by using canopies, tents, or other portable means of shade.

b) Administrative and procedural measures such as relocating the outdoor work to a shady area, or alternatively rescheduling the work outside the hours of 10 am to 2 pm.

c) Personal protective measures such as wearing hats, broad spectrum sunscreens, sunglasses and appropriate clothing. The priority with personal protection is to cover the skin in preference to using sunscreens.

3.3 The use of personal protective measures should only be considered as a last resort.

3.4 Where employees or students are potentially exposed to excessive solar radiation, an exposure assessment shall be undertaken by the department or area. In particular the assessment shall include:

- work tasks which involve exposure to solar UV radiation
- the hours during which the tasks are performed
- reflective surfaces and the presence of photosensitising agents
- the feasibility of each control strategy
- need for medical surveillance
- training and education
- supervision and compliance

4. PERSONAL PROTECTION

4.1 The provision of personal protective equipment shall be made in accordance with Section 32.1 of the La Trobe University Administrative Handbook, "Uniforms, protective clothing and safety equipment".

4.2 Personal protective equipment shall comply with the following:

a) Clothing shall be cool and loose fitting, with the weave chosen so as to prevent or minimise UV penetration.

b) Sunscreens shall be broad spectrum and have an SPF of 15 or greater. The sunscreen must also be appropriate to the nature of the work being undertaken. For example, if water contact is likely, the sunscreen should be water resistant.

c) Hats should be wide brimmed and provide ventilation around the head. If the work involves much bending, a flap to cover the back of the neck is recommended.

d) Sunglasses shall allow no more than 5% of UV-A and UV-B penetration.

5. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

5.1 The Safety Officer shall coordinate a training course as the need arises for

all employees working outdoors or exposed to high levels of UV radiation.

5.2 The programme shall include:

- what skin cancer is
- how ultraviolet radiation causes skin cancer
- solar UV high risk / intensity periods
- prevention strategies
- methods of self examination and early detection

5.3 All employees or students who are potentially exposed to excessive solar radiation must be informed of the hazards of solar UV radiation and the strategies available to control those hazards.

6. HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

The pre-placement medical examination shall include skin examination for persons deemed to be at risk. Thereafter they shall be examined at yearly intervals.