

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SAFETY POLICY & ARRANGEMENTS



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Introduction

This document forms part of the National Ice Centre's organisational written safety policy arrangements.

Departments, services or teams may consider it appropriate to develop additional guidance and systems of work on specific work related activities.

Where proposals, additional guidance or changes to systems of work will have an impact on health, safety and welfare, this will be discussed and agreed at the Health & Safety Committee.

If you have any questions or require further information or support on the contents of this document, please contact the NIC Health & Safety Advisor or Corporate Safety Advice.

Overview Of Management & Colleague Responsibilities

Manager Responsibilities

Below is an overview of the responsibilities which is intended to support managers in identifying their key duties that need to be taken to comply with the requirements of this document and the safety management systems of the National Ice Centre.

- Managers need to complete a risk assessment where outdoor working forms a part of the work where an identified risk may be present
- Managers must ensure that the risk assessment identifies appropriate control measures
- Managers must ensure that identified control measures been implemented? (e.g. has work been re-scheduled to minimise exposure, have colleagues been encouraged to cover up with appropriate clothing, is sunscreen provided etc.)
- Managers need to implement arrangements to monitor the effectiveness and use of those control measures? (e.g. are employees covering up with clothing, is sunscreen being used etc, have employees reported health problems that could be due to over exposure to the sun.)
- Managers must ensure the findings of the risk assessment been formally discussed with all identified employees and their safety representatives
- Managers need to have the arrangements in place to review risk assessments either when there has been a significant change, a weather-related incident or, for example, annually, to ensure that they are still relevant

Employee Responsibilities

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 section 7 requires all employees to consider their own health & safety and the safety of others.

As an employee of the National Ice Centre, if you have concerns in relation to health & safety that is likely to cause you or someone else, injury or ill health then you must ensure that the concern is communicated to your manager immediately.

You are also required to co-operate with the management of the National Ice Centre to ensure compliance with the health & safety arrangements, policies and procedures and work to the requirements identified within this document.

Background

Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can cause skin damage including sunburn, blistering, skin aging and in the long term can lead to skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the UK, with over 40,000 new cases diagnosed each year. UV radiation should be considered an occupational hazard for people who work outdoors for most of the day.

Exposure to cold conditions can lead to serious illness, so as with UV radiation, it is important to be aware of the temperature and how to protect against it.

Cold exposure can occur in weather that is not freezing.

Wind, humidity and moisture remove body heat, which can eventually lead to hypothermia. The cold primarily affects the body's extremities.

Hands and feet are further away from the body core and have less blood flow. Colleagues can deal with low temperatures much better than high temperatures by adding additional layers of clothing.

The human body is not generally well-equipped physiologically to cope with cold environments.

The two main responses are:

- a) to increase heat production, partly by muscular activity such as shivering and partly by secreting hormones to raise the body's metabolic rate;
- b) to reduce heat loss by constricting (narrowing) the blood vessels of the skin.

In response to these changes the oxygen uptake will increase and cardiac output will rise.

If cold exposure continues, or if it is sufficiently severe, then cooling of the hands (blanching), feet, ears and face may result in their blood vessels dilating intermittently.

It is also good practice to consider people other than your employees, towards who you owe a duty of care e.g. agency staff and school pupils, if they could be exposed to the sun or cold environments for significant periods of time.

However, it may not be possible or appropriate to apply the same controls and specific guidelines may need to be issued.

Who Is At Risk From Excessive Exposure To Sunlight

- People with pale skin are most at risk of skin damage, especially those with fair or red hair, with a lot of moles or freckles, with a personal or family history of skin cancer or been sunburned before, especially when young.
- People with brown or black skin are at lower risk but people of all skin colours can suffer from overheating and dehydration.
- People with certain medical conditions may be at increased risk.

What Are The Risks From Excessive Weather Conditions

Heat stress:

The symptoms of heat stress are clammy skin, light-headedness, slurred speech, rapid pulse, fatigue, nausea, and short temper. Heat stress can lead to heat stroke.

Heat stroke:

This is more severe than heat stress – sweating will stop, body temperature will be high and the skin is hot and dry. Confusion and loss of consciousness can occur. Heat stroke requires immediate medical treatment.

Skin cancer:

Nearly all skin cancers are caused by the sun.

There are two main types:

- *Malignant melanoma* – a rare but dangerous form of skin cancer. It can spread rapidly, but if caught and treated early, then the chances of survival are good.
- Melanomas are commonest among sun-sensitive types who spend most of the year indoors and then take a fortnight's holiday in the sun.
- *Non-melanoma* – this form of skin cancer is far more common than melanoma, and much less dangerous. It is nearly always curable. Non-melanomas are thought to be linked to long-term exposure to the sun, which is why people who work outdoors are at greater risk.



Abnormal reactions to sunlight:

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

For further information check product labels and COSHH risk assessments where applicable or consult a GP.

Reducing The Risk From Hot Weather Conditions

Where colleagues work outside and may be exposed to hot weather conditions, managers will need to ensure a risk assessment is in place to identify the control measures that are required.

Potential controls **could** include:

- Scheduling work activities to minimize exposure. UV rays are most intense when the sun is high in the sky, between 11am and 3pm.
- Encouraging colleagues to keep covered up during the summer months, especially at lunch-time when the sun is at its hottest. Managers should recommend the use of a long-sleeved shirt and a hat that protects the ears and neck. Colleagues should consider clothing that is a loose fitting and close woven fabric. Ideally clothing made from natural fibres should be considered as it reduces skin irritation, however this must be considered in line with the protective equipment requirements of any work activity undertaken.
- Providing and encouraging the use of a sunscreen of at least Sun Protection Factor (SPF) 15 or more that should be worn on any part of the body that cannot be covered up e.g. face, back of neck and hands. Total sun-block should be considered for exposed areas such as your nose, ears and lips, which are more susceptible to getting burnt. Sunscreen needs to be available and reapplied at regular intervals. Where the risk assessment identifies the need for sunscreen, it must be provided free of charge.
- Where a risk assessment formally identifies the need to provide eye protection in the form of sunglasses e.g. where glare creates a specific problem. Sunglasses must be “CE marked”, meet with BS

EN 1836:2005 and have a UV 400 label. The type of sunglasses as protective equipment must be identified within a specific risk assessment.

- Advise colleagues to take breaks in the shade if possible, rather than staying out in the sun.
- Ensure that adequate supplies of drinking water or cold drinks are readily available and that workers are encouraged to drink plenty of fluid to avoid dehydration.
- Include sun protection advice in induction and health and safety training. Inform colleagues that a tan is not healthy – it is a sign that skin has already been damaged by the sun.
- Regularly remind colleagues about the dangers of sun exposure.
- Encourage colleagues to check their skin regularly for unusual spots or moles that change size, shape or colour and to seek medical advice promptly if they find anything that causes them concern.

Who Is At Risk From Excessive Cold

- Smokers who may have circulatory impairment.
- Colleagues who work outside and use equipment and have direct contact with the equipments cold surfaces e.g. highways maintenance
- Colleagues who work primarily outside and their work involves time constraint and/or an absence of fixed accommodation e.g. grounds maintenance, waste collection and Community Protection Officers.
- Colleagues whose work involves working in water.
- Colleagues with certain medical conditions may be at increased risk.

What Are The Risks From Excessive Cold

Frostnip

This is the freezing of the top layers of skin tissue and is normally reversible. It mostly affects the cheeks, earlobes, fingers, and toes.

Symptoms include:

- Numbness.
- Top layer of skin feeling hard and rubbery, but deeper tissue is soft.
- Skin becomes white and waxy.



Frostbite

Frostbite is the actual freezing of the tissue and/or body part. Ice crystals form inside the skin that can destroy the tissues, and you could lose skin or part of a finger, toe, or foot, for example.

It affects the ears, nose, fingers and toes most often. Superficial frostbite includes all layers of skin, and deep frostbite can include freezing of muscle and/or bone.

Symptoms include:

- Skin that is white and has a "wooden" feel all the way through.
- Numbness, possible anaesthesia



Hypothermia

This is the general cooling of the body. When the body drops much below the normal body temperature, serious ill health can arise.

Severe hypothermia can lead to death.

Symptoms include:

- Uncontrollable shivering.
- Still able to walk and talk.
- Numbness of hands.
- Unable to complete tasks with hands.

Reducing The Risk In Cold Weather Conditions

Managers are responsible for ensuring a risk assessment has been carried out by a competent person.

This will help you decide if further control measures need to be implemented.

These **could** include:

- Avoid the need for work in water during winter months or other unusual cold periods.
- Ensure that time and provision is made for regular warm drinks or for breaks in warm environments.
- Ensure that suitable protective clothing is provided and worn and that this clothing also provides protection from wind and rain where appropriate.

The general requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, anything provided in the interests of health, safety and welfare be provided free of charge.

Within the Corporate Safety Manual, the Safety Policy and Arrangements – ‘Slips and Trips’ also identifies that weather conditions (snow, rain or ice) also increase the potential for accidents to occur and slip and trips should be considered as part of any assessment process

References & Further Information

The following information and reference material is in place to assist managers to understand their responsibilities and duties.

NCC Documentation & Links

- Slips and Trips

External References

- INDG 337 – ‘Sun Protection – advice for employers of outdoor workers’ (HSE).
- Department of Health – Heat wave Guidance documents (www.dh.gov.uk search “heat wave”)
- NHS Direct- Advice on Sunburn (www.nhs.uk/conditions/Sunburn)