



# Tailgate Safety Training for Landscaping and Horticultural Services

Agricultural Safety Program, 590 Woody Hayes Drive, Columbus, OH 43210

## Sun Exposure

**Objective: Identify the risks of overexposure to the sun and means to prevent overexposure.**

### *How to Use This Module*

Sun exposure is a hazard that landscapers and green industry service personnel cannot avoid. Too much exposure to the sun can cause skin cancer. For this module:

- Review the information below on sun exposure, types of skin cancer, and how to minimize the risk of skin cancer.
- Discuss wearing protective clothing and sunscreen with co-workers and supervisors.
- If workers are willing, ask them to share personal experiences with skin cancer.
- Take the True/False quiz to check your learning.

For related topics, see the Tailgate Safety Training module *Heat Stress*.

## Background

Workers in the green industry work long hours, often outside in the sun. During peak season, workers can spend even more hours exposed to the sun. However, too much exposure to the sun can cause skin cancer. About 800,000 new skin cancer cases are diagnosed each year. Proper personal protection must be used to limit skin exposure. Wearing a hat and applying sunscreen reduce the chance of getting skin cancer.

Sun exposure is a key factor in the development of skin cancers. Basal cell and squamous cell skin cancer risk is linked with cumulative sun exposure. Malignant melanoma risk is linked with cumulative sun exposure and the number of severe burns. Some people have greater risk of skin changes and skin cancer from sun exposure:

- People who burn easily, rarely tan, and have freckles.
- People who have a fair complexion.
- People with blonde or red hair.
- People with blue or gray eyes.

## Watch for Skin Cancer

You should check any skin spot that spontaneously bleeds, changes color, or changes size. A self-exam guide can help you decide when you should see a doctor. The American Cancer Society has a good self-exam guide. Look for these physical signs:

- Asymmetrical spots.
- Irregular borders.
- Color variations.
- Diameters bigger than the end of a pencil eraser.

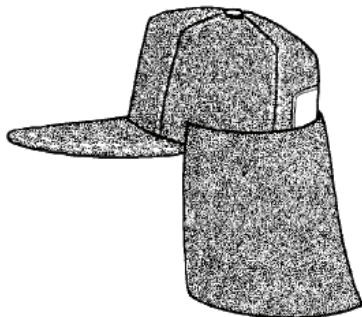
If you have any questions about the possibility of skin cancer, consult a doctor.

## Skin Cancers

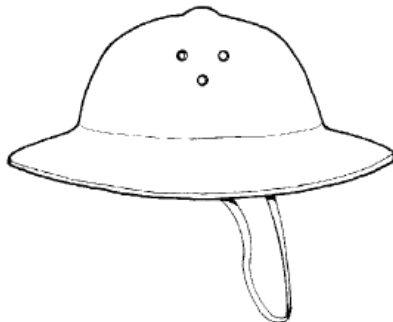
- **Basal cell cancer** looks shiny. It usually can be cut away or treated topically. If diagnosed and treated early, it can be cured. It is more of a concern later in life.
- **Squamous cell cancer** looks rusty and warty. It usually can be cut away or treated topically. If it is diagnosed and treated early, it can be cured. It is more of a concern later in life.
- **Melanoma** looks like a dark mole. However, malignant melanoma can be dangerous, even fatal. Melanoma cases have been steadily rising. It affects people of all ages.

## To Minimize Risk of Skin Cancer

- Protective clothing acts as a barrier between the skin and the sun. So, wear long sleeves, long pants, high socks, and gloves. Tighter woven fabrics provide greater protection. Lighter colored clothing reflects heat better.



- Wear a wide brimmed hat, cap flap or the flap on cap. A baseball cap offers the least protection. Baseball hats do not protect ear tips, temples, or back of the neck.



- Use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or more while working outdoors. Reapply the sunscreen every two hours. SPF measures protection from sun exposure, not length of time exposed to the sun.

- Use a sunscreen that provides all-day protection or broad-spectrum sunblock to block both UVA and UVB ultraviolet light.
- If you note skin changes, see a doctor.
- Wear sunglasses to block ultraviolet (UV) rays and protect the eyes from sun exposure. Wraparound lenses offer the best protection. Sunglasses should block at least 99 percent of UV rays. Look for that information on the label.
- While working outdoors in the sun, you can get dehydrated. Dehydration can be very serious. Drink one glass of water every 15 to 30 minutes. (For more information, see the Tailgate Safety Training module *Heat Stress*.)

## **Review These Important Points**

- Skin cancers are the most common cancers experienced in the United States.
- The major cause of skin cancers is the amount of time a person is exposed to the sun.
- Wear protective clothing that serves as a barrier between the sun and the skin.

## **About These Modules**

The author team for the training modules in the landscape and horticultural tailgate training series includes Dee Jepsen, Program Director, Agricultural Safety and Health, Ohio State University Extension; Michael Wonacott, Research Specialist, Vocational Education; Peter Ling, Greenhouse Specialist; and Thomas Bean, Agricultural Safety Specialist. Modules were developed with funding from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Grant Number 46E3-HT09.

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Answer Key: 1 = T, 2 = F, 3 = F, 4 = T, 5 = F.

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EXTENSION

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## Sun Exposure

*Name* \_\_\_\_\_

### True or False?

1. Wear lighter-colored protective clothing as a barrier between the sun and skin. T F
2. Use a sunscreen with SPF below 15 if working outdoors. T F
3. Melanoma only affects older people. T F
4. Workers in the green industry are continually at risk of developing skin cancer of the head, face, ears, or neck. T F
5. A self-exam guide is a good substitute for seeing a doctor. T F