



# SUN SAFETY GUIDANCE

## FOR SCAFFOLDERS WORKING OUTDOORS



**MAKE SUN PROTECTION PART OF YOUR DAILY ROUTINE – JUST LIKE PPE**

You wouldn't step onto a scaffold without your hard hat, boots or harness.

Sun protection should be no different.

Apply sunscreen, stay hydrated and protect exposed skin before every shift.

Small habits today help prevent serious skin damage tomorrow.

**Protect your skin.**

**Stay hydrated.**

**Work safe. Get home safe.**

### 1. UNDERSTAND THE RISKS

UV radiation from the sun can damage your skin and eyes. Scaffolding work often increases exposure because of:

- Long periods outdoors at height
- UV rays reflecting off metal, bricks, concrete, glass and water
- Increased risk of skin cancer, premature ageing and eye damage
- UV can penetrate thin cloud cover
- UV levels can be high even on cloudy or cool days
- Some medications can increase sun sensitivity – check the label or ask your pharmacist

**UV levels are strongest between 11am and 3pm, but can be high at any time of day.**

### 2. SUNBURN AND SKIN DAMAGE

Sunburn is your skin's way of telling you it's damaged. Repeated sun exposure increases the risk of skin cancer.

Signs of sunburn:

- Red, hot or painful skin
- Swelling
- Blistering
- Peeling
- Headache, chills or feeling unwell (in more severe cases)

**Skin damage builds up over time. Protect your skin every day, not just on hot days.**

### 3. PROTECT YOURSELF

Your first line of defence is covering up.

- Wear long sleeves and long trousers made from tightly woven fabric.
- Wear a wide-brimmed or legionnaire-style hat to protect your face, ears and neck.
- Wear UV-rated sunglasses that wrap around the sides.
- Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 minimum, SPF 50 preferred. Apply generously to all exposed skin 15–20 minutes before going outside and reapply every 2 hours – or more often if sweating heavily.
- Cover up tattoos and exposed skin where possible.
- Don't forget often missed areas: ears, neck, back of neck, tops of feet, hands and nose.

### 4. HYDRATE REGULARLY

Scaffolders work hard in all weathers. Heat and sun exposure can lead to dehydration quickly.

- Drink water regularly throughout the day.
- Don't wait until you're thirsty.
- In hot weather, you can lose fluids quickly through sweat.
- Consider electrolyte drinks during very hot or heavy work days.
- Check your urine – pale yellow means you're hydrated, dark yellow means you need more fluids.



### 5. RECOGNISE THE SYMPTOMS

Early recognition helps prevent serious illness.

#### HEAT EXHAUSTION

- Heavy sweating
- Tiredness or weakness
- Dizziness or headache
- Nausea
- Cool, pale, clammy skin
- Muscle cramps

#### HEAT STROKE – MEDICAL EMERGENCY

- High body temperature (hot, red skin)
- Confusion or disorientation
- Rapid pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Fainting or loss of consciousness

**ACT FAST: Move to shade, cool down, drink water and seek medical help immediately.**

### 6. WORKING OUTDOORS RESPONSIBLY

Employers and workers have a duty to manage sun and heat risks.

Employers must:

- ✓ Assess sun and heat risks and record findings
- ✓ Provide shade, water and information
- ✓ Allow extra breaks and adjust workloads
- ✓ Provide suitable sunscreen and PPE
- ✓ Monitor workers for signs of heat stress

**Key legal duties:** Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 – duty to ensure health, safety and welfare. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 – duty to assess risks and implement controls.

Workers must:

- ✓ Follow safe systems of work
- ✓ Use the protection and facilities provided
- ✓ Report signs of heat stress in themselves or others

### 7. DAILY SUN SAFETY CHECKLIST

Check the daily UV index and plan work around shade where possible.

Wear your full sun protection gear – every day, all year round – just like PPE.

Make sun protection part of your daily routine.

Stay hydrated – drink water regularly.

Take regular breaks in the shade or rest areas.

Look out for your mates – speak up if someone isn't well.

**SUN SAFETY IS SITE SAFETY**  
Protect your skin. Stay hydrated. Stay focused. Work safe. Get home safe.

#### FURTHER SUPPORT AND ADVICE

**PHYSICAL WELLBEING**  
For practical advice on healthy eating, hydration, sleep and general health:  
**NHS Live Well**  
[www.nhs.uk/live-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well)

#### MENTAL WELLBEING

Confidential support for construction workers and their families:  
**Lighthouse Charity**  
0345 605 1956 (24/7 Helpline)  
Text **HARDHAT** to 85258  
[www.lighthouseclub.org](http://www.lighthouseclub.org)

#### SUPERVISOR REMINDER

- ✓ Lead by example.
- ✓ Encourage and enforce sun protection.
- ✓ Make sun safety part of daily briefings.
- ✓ Provide shade, water and
- ✓ Look out for signs of heat stress.

#### DOWNLOAD FULL GUIDANCE

Visit our website for tools, guidance and resources, including the full Sun Safety Guidance (PDF).