



Protecting your Outdoor Worker from the Sun

A focus on lifeguards and instructors

Years ago, lifeguards were the icons of sun-seeking, bronzed Albertans. Clothing was minimal, shade was non-existent, and a dark tan was a source of pride. Today, many lifeguards and instructors continue to spend much of their working day in the sun. But times have changed! Lifeguards and instructors are the new model for healthy, active living under the sun.

The Lifesaving Society encourages lifeguards and instructors to protect themselves from long-term skin damage, including non-melanoma and melanoma skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Alberta, but it is also highly preventable.

Protecting your staff from the sun is as easy as 1, 2, 3:

1. Cover up

Staff need to wear a wide-brimmed hat that covers their face and neck, but does not reduce visibility. Polarized sunglasses that reduce glare from water reflection are also important.

2. Use sunscreen

Encourage staff to use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. (The Lifesaving Society recommends SPF 30). Sunscreen should be applied 20 minutes before starting a shift, and be re-applied every two hours.

3. Seek shade

Shade is a great source of sun protection. It can also help keep them cool at work. Create sources of shade at your facility, such as umbrellas or canopies. Encourage staff to make use of shade during their breaks, especially between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the intensity of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays is greatest.

Many facilities are now developing policies and practices to help reduce sun exposure for outdoor workers. Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Code*, staff are responsible for cooperating with health and safety rules outlined by their employer. Sun protection for aquatic staff is also a requirement of the Lifesaving Society's Safety Standards for aquatic facilities and beaches.

Reduce the skin cancer risk in your workplace:

Occupational Health and Safety Code requires an employer to do everything that can be done to ensure that staff members are safe, healthy, and productive. Lifeguards and



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Instructors are part of an occupational group known to be at increased risk for high intensity UV exposure.

There are resources available that can help you support and promote sun protection with your staff team.

- Visit the Lifesaving Society's website to review the position statement on *Sun Protection in the Aquatic Environment*. See: www.lifesaving.org/asm/sun.htm
- Familiarize yourself with sun protection statements contained in the *Safety Standards* documents. Contact the Lifesaving Society to order, or see: www.lifesaving.org/asm/safetystandards.htm
- Contact the Lifesaving Society for tips on increasing shade in the aquatic environment.
- Check out the Alberta Cancer Board's *Sunright - Sun Safety website*: <http://www.cancerboard.ab.ca/sunright/>
- Check out the Canadian Dermatology Association website for more information on implementing a sun safety program in the workplace at: www.dermatology.ca/outdoorworkers/index.html

Your staff can make great "sun safe" role models!

Together, aquatic facility managers, lifeguards and instructors are uniquely suited to promote sun safety. As a team, they can influence behaviour change by role modeling sun protection for swimmers. The day of the sun-soaked lifeguard has come and gone. Research now shows that a "base tan" does not protect you from the sun, and that just one severe sun burn can increase your risk of developing skin cancer.

This summer, please join the Lifesaving Society of Alberta/NWT and work toward being sun safe!

Lifesaving Society
11759 Groat Road
Edmonton, AB T5K 3M6
Tel: 780-415-1755 / Fax: 780-427-9334
experts@lifesaving.org / www.lifesaving.org
