

How to Stay Safe When Working Outdoors in Searing Heat

Tradespeople have been offered key advice for staying safe and healthy when working outdoors in the searing summer heat.

Researchers from commercial vehicle experts LeaseVan.co.uk have revealed eight tips for avoiding sun burn or heat stroke from working outside.

Every summer millions of outdoor workers face the risk of dehydration and heat stress as well as the increased risk of an accident happening because of tiredness and lack of concentration.

Too much sunlight can be extremely harmful to your skin, causing sunburn and blistering as well as irreversible ageing.

In the long term, it can also lead to an increased risk of skin cancer, one of the most common forms of cancer in the UK.

If you work outdoors for a long time, your skin could be exposed to more sun than is healthy for you, and you should take particular care if you have fair or freckled skin, red or fair hair, or a large number of moles.

Tim Alcock from LeaseVan.co.uk commented: "For British workers, blistering hot days are few and far between – even over the summer – so they're often a cause for celebration when they do roll around. But if you're an outdoor worker, they can actually pose a health hazard if you're not careful. "Very few employers include heat/sun exposure in their risk assessment, so unfortunately a lot of workers have to make it their own responsibility to stay safe in the sun. While you cannot change when the sun is going to shine, there are a few precautions and extra measures you can take to prioritise your health and wellness at work on such days."

1. Stay hydrated

It sounds simple, but the importance of staying hydrated when it's hot outside cannot be emphasised enough. If you simply wait until you're thirsty before you drink water, you may be well beyond the point you needed to replenish fluids. Make sure you drink water every 15 to 20 minutes.

2. Ditch the caffeine

Many of us rely on the morning boost a big cup of coffee provides, but when a heat wave is on, don't overdo it on the caffeine as in excess, it can prompt dehydration. Don't forget that energy drinks usually contain a high dose of it as well, so even if you think you need a lift to get through a tough afternoon, try to avoid it when trying to beat the heat.

3. Dress appropriately

When the heat is particularly gruelling, it's critical to keep yourself protected from the sun's rays. That means wear cool, loose-fitting clothing in light-coloured fabrics that breathe and help to maintain a healthy body temperature. If you can wear a hat on the job, make sure you do so.

And whilst it's tempting to strip off clothing when the temperatures are soaring, leaving your skin exposed to the sun can do more harm than good, leading to severe sunburns or heat stroke.

4. Sun cream

Even if you're properly dressed for the conditions, it's impossible not have some skin exposed, so make sure you apply a sun cream that has an SPF rating of at least 30 and keep layering it on throughout the day.

5. Eat right

If you're working in the heat avoid a heavy lunch, especially protein-rich meats. You're better off with small snacks and light meals throughout the day, as your body creates more metabolic heat if it's breaking down heavy foods.

6. Take shelter

Even if you're properly dressed for the conditions and you've slathered your body in sun cream, it's a good idea to get out of the sun as often as possible throughout the day. Take breaks in the shade and, if possible, move some tasks to covered areas.

7. Cut back at happy hour

There's nothing wrong with unwinding after a long, hot day on the job with an alcoholic beverage, but you shouldn't overdo it during a heatwave as you'll feel alcohol's dehydrating effects the next day.

8. Pace yourself

Wherever possible, slow down and work at an even pace. Make sure you know your limits and don't ignore the warning signs if you're starting to feel exhausted. Warning signs of heat exhaustion can include heavy sweating, rapid pulse, dizziness, goose bumps, muscle cramps and head ache.

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