

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tradies aren't protecting against skin cancer despite up to ten times higher UV exposure

New data reveals that Australia's tradies aren't acting to protect themselves from the sun despite exposure to skin cancer causing ultraviolet radiation (UV) up to ten times the rate of indoor workers.

Nearly a quarter of tradies surveyed (24%) only rarely or occasionally wear sunscreen in the summer months. In winter this drops even more, with almost half of tradies surveyed (46%) only rarely or occasionally applying sunscreen.

Unsurprisingly, almost six in 10 (58%) Aussie tradies surveyed know colleagues who have had skin cancer. While around half the tradies are confident explaining their favourite sport (52%) or how to cook the perfect steak (47%) almost three quarters (73%) admit they can't explain how UV works, or its relationship to 'Australia's national cancer'.

With nine in 10 tradespeople (89%) surveyed spending time outdoors on a typical workday, and over four in ten (42%) spending more than four hours working outside, the Australian Government and Cancer Council are urging tradies to protect themselves against UV whenever they are outdoors.

These and other concerning findings have been released today in a new YouGov report, as a part of a [SunSmart campaign](#) from the Australian Government and Cancer Council. The campaign urges Australians to be SunSmart and remember the 5 S's - Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek, and Slide - whenever the UV is three or above.

Chief Executive of Cancer Council Australia, Dr Tanya Buchanan, noted Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, and regular outdoor work means that tradies are at an even higher risk than those working indoors.

"Tradies are known to have high standards when it comes to safety on site, but this data shows many aren't fully considering sun safety as a part of their daily routines. Despite two-thirds of respondents (66%) being concerned about developing skin cancer, over a fifth (22%) don't believe sunscreen is necessary every day.

"A few minutes each day to follow the 5 s's can help prevent skin cancer caused by UV – regardless of the time of year – so it's important for tradies to remember to be SunSmart," added Dr Buchanan.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring all Australians, and particularly our tradies, can recognise and protect themselves from the dangers of UV.



“The Australian Government has invested in this Cancer Council campaign to help remind Australians of the 5 S’s – only two more than the vintage Slip, Slop, Slap, and give tradies and tradie organisations the tools they need to protect themselves from the dangers of UV,” the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt said.

A free *SunSmart Tradie Toolbox* has been developed for tradies to refer to before they head onto job sites and throughout the day, with SunSmart messaging that can be quickly and easily downloaded and displayed next to safety signage on job sites.

Activates Construction owners Adam and Tarah Hastie welcomed the addition of the SunSmart Tradie Toolbox, saying some simple messaging for tradies to see each day as they arrived on site was something everyone in the building and construction industry could support.

“It’s so important to make sure your hat, sunnies and sunscreen are packed as part of your everyday routine before you head off to work,” Mr Hastie said. “I’m constantly reminding myself and my trades to be careful and remember that safety comes first on-site – and that includes being SunSmart.”

Mrs Hastie added that there was a range of ages, backgrounds, and personalities across Activates job sites, but the common theme of safety was non-negotiable.

“We take our work seriously and we have fun along the way, but above all, we want to see everyone arrive and leave work safely. A few minutes each day re-applying sunscreen or putting on some sunnies goes a long way to keeping you safe now and in the future.”

Currently, two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime.

In 2021, it was estimated 16,878 people would be diagnosed with melanoma and approximately 1,400 Australians lose their lives to melanoma each year. Without action, between now and 2030, more than 14,000 Australians will lose their lives to melanoma.

The digital tradie toolbox is available to download from www.cancer.org.au/go/sunsmart-tradie-toolbox with information and reminders of the five S’s that can be easily used on job sites, next to existing safety messaging. Tradies – and all Australians – are also encouraged to download the free [SunSmart App](#) to check the UV in their local area.

The announcement of the digital tradie toolbox is the latest awareness program as part of a national skin cancer prevention campaign funded by the Australian Government, encouraging Australians to Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide whenever the UV is three or above.

For more information, head to www.cancer.org.au or www.myuv.com.au

YouGov research highlights

From the 600 tradespeople surveyed:

- 89% spend time outdoors on a typical workday, with 42% of those spending more than four hours working outside. Amongst the 89% - QLD tradies (49%) and NSW tradies (44%) are more likely to spend more than four hours outdoors as part of their job compared to SA tradies (44%).
- 96% have at least heard of the 'UV index' but only 27% felt confident explaining how UV works and at what level to protect themselves. Instead, they're more confident explaining the rules of their favourite sport (52%), how to cook a perfect steak on the barbecue (47%), and how to set up the surround sound for their TV (40%).
- Only 69% of tradies surveyed from NSW and 70% in QLD said they were very, or somewhat, aware of the UV Index and check it. Compared to 77% in VIC, 84% in WA and 87% in SA.
- 83% of those who were very/somewhat aware of the UV Index were not able to correctly identify the sun protection needed when UV levels hit 3 or above.
- 34% have either been treated for skin cancer or another suspicious spot themselves and 58% knew of other tradespeople who have had skin cancer. Of those who live in QLD, most (67%) know other tradespeople who have had skin cancer compared to those from NSW (54%) and SA (50%). Many QLD tradies surveyed (60%) are also very/somewhat concerned about developing skin cancer.
- 46% say they rarely/occasionally wear sunscreen during the winter months, and 50% say they only rarely/occasionally wear sunscreen on days that are cloudy or overcast despite the fact the UV radiation can be high on cool or cold days. During summer months, 25% of tradies surveyed say they rarely/occasionally wear sunscreen when working outdoors. For those that do wear sunscreen when working outdoors, 16% say they never reapply throughout the day.
- 50% say the main reason they don't wear sunscreen is they forget to put it on, 22% say they don't believe it's necessary every day, 21% say it's too greasy for them, and 18% say it's an inconvenience.
- 27% of tradies surveyed say that sun safety isn't encouraged by their employer on their worksite.

About the YouGov research

This study was conducted by independent market research firm YouGov between 22nd February and 2nd March 2022.

The sample comprised of 600 Australian tradespersons aged 18 years and older. Respondents included builders, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, landscapers, roofers, project managers, surveyors, and architects.

Additional resources



- Cancer Council Australia – skin cancer [facts and stats](#)
- Cancer Council Australia – [what is UV and the UV Index](#)
- Cancer Council Australia – [SunSmart Tradie Toolbox](#)