

Environmental Information Regulations – Response - 27838

I am getting in touch to make a request under the FOI act regarding your council's adverse weather policy as I'm looking to understand how your council manages extreme and adverse weather for your staff including provisions for their safety etc.

The specific information I would like to request is as follows:

1. Do you have an adverse weather policy, when was it instated and how regularly is your policy reviewed?

We have the following which are attached:

Health & Safety Guidance:

- Working in Sunlight guidance
- Working Indoors During Extreme Hot Weather guidance
- Driving for Work policy and guidance (related extract attached)

HR guidance:

- Bad Weather Guide

2. Does your adverse weather policy include the commitment to undertake risk assessments for the specific adverse weather event?

No, in line with all Health and Safety guidance, Managers are expected to carry out a risk assessment for all tasks

3. Does your adverse weather policy include the commitment to undertake an equality impact assessment for specific adverse weather events?

No

4. Does your adverse weather policy refer to your health & safety policy? And if so, what link does the policy make to health & safety provisions?

No, but the main Safety Health & Wellbeing policy (SHAW03 – Arrangements) details all the subsidiary policies and guidance mentioned above.

5. What specific provisions does the adverse weather policy make for agency, zero hours, temporary and casual workers?

None.

6. What is the procedure within your adverse weather policy for staff who are struggling to get to work and/or concerned about returning home?

Please see the attached guidance.

7. Under your adverse weather policy how staff are notified about office closures?

Local managers would cascade messages about office closures.

8. Within your adverse weather policy, what options are provided to staff in terms of adjustments staff can request from their line manager such as flexible working, shift swapping, home working, alternative duties etc?

Please see the attached guidance.

9. Does your adverse weather policy require employees to take mandatory annual leave or unpaid leave if they can't undertake their regular duties due to adverse weather?

Please see the attached guidance.

10. Can you confirm your adverse weather policy makes provisions for staff to be paid as normal even if they are unable to work from home during extreme or adverse weather?

Please see the attached guidance.

11. What does your adverse weather policy say about the role of trade unions in the development and review of your adverse weather policy?

All HR policies and Health & Safety guidance are approved through routes which include trade union representation.

HR advice on extreme weather and disturbances to public transport or school closures

It is recognised that employees may have difficulty getting to and from work during periods of severe weather or when there are disruptions to public transport or school closures. However, while the health and safety of all employees is paramount, every effort must also be made to ensure that disruption to services is minimal.

You are asked to try to attend work in all circumstances without putting yourself or others at unnecessary risk.

You should use your own judgement in assessing any risk and if you are unable to get to work you must contact your line manager as soon as possible and agree one of the following options:

- To work from home or an alternative work location.
- To take the time as annual leave/flexi leave.
- To make up the time at a later date.
- To take unpaid leave.

All annual leave/flexi leave should be booked in the normal way. If you are taking unpaid leave and use self service this must be booked in the same way as any other type of leave.

If you manage someone who is taking unpaid leave and doesn't use self service please ensure you either book it in the self service system on their behalf or if you submit batch spreadsheets for leave information ensure it is recorded on there and submitted to payroll in the normal way to ensure that the appropriate deduction is processed. Please note that where unpaid leave is booked after the payroll deadline, it will be deducted from the following pay period.

Where school closures or disturbances to public transport are known about in advance (e.g. as a result of strike action), managers should talk to their teams as early as possible to ascertain who is likely to be affected as well as identifying any pre-booked leave already agreed in order to consider the potential impact on their service and plan accordingly.

Where severe weather conditions or disruptions to transport/schools occur during the course of a working day, line managers should decide on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate for employees to leave work early. When making this decision, individual circumstances should be taken into account, including:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distance from home to work.• Mode of transport.• Caring responsibilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The operational needs of the service.• The employees views |
|--|---|

Severe Weather – Snow and Ice

If the weather is likely to turn severe, such as ice and snow, then avoid going out if you can. Most journeys on council business are not urgent, with a few exceptions such as:

- Winter maintenance operations
- Fire and Rescue Service

These journeys will require task specific risk assessments.

If your journey is unavoidable, then take the following precautions:

- Double check that your vehicle is completely road worthy, lights, fluid level, tyre pressures etc.
- Make sure that your washer bottle is full up as you use a lot of washer fluid in the wintertime when salt and dirt obscure the windscreen very quickly. Use a strong concentration of washer fluid to water to ensure that the sprayer nozzle does not freeze up.
- Make sure that you wear or carry warm clothes and appropriate footwear in the event you break down or are stranded for a prolonged period.
- Take a blanket, warm drink in a flask, some food, and a torch in case you get stranded and must spend the night in your vehicle.
- Take a mobile phone with you in case you need to summon help and make sure it is fully charged before you set off.
- Make sure someone knows where you are going and what time you expect to arrive. Let them know when you arrive safely or if you get delayed.

SHAW51G – Working in Sunlight

Safety, Health, and Wellbeing Guidance

Working in Sunlight

Document Owner:	Martin Fisher
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SHAW51G – Working in Sunlight**DOCUMENT CONTROL****Changes History**

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Name	Organisation
All Staff – IRIS	Suffolk County Council

Review Period

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SHAW51G – Working in Sunlight**1. Introduction**

For most of the year, sunshine levels in the UK are of no particular concern. This guidance is aimed predominantly at people who work outdoors a lot of the time and especially during the summer months when the UV index is 5 or above (see [Appendix 1](#)).

2. What are the dangers?**Short term exposure to sunlight**

Too much exposure to strong sunlight can cause sunburn which can blister your skin and make it peel. Even reddening is a sign of early skin damage.

Working in strong sunlight will inevitably mean it will be hot, so dehydration is also a factor to consider.

Exposure to strong sunlight can cause inflammation of the eye although UV levels in the UK rarely reach levels that would induce this.

Long term exposure to sunlight

Prolonged exposure to sunlight over a long period of time speeds up the ageing process of your skin, making it leathery, mottled and wrinkled, but the most serious effect is an increased chance of developing skin cancer.

Prolonged, long-term exposure to UV light can increase the chance of developing a cataract. UV levels in the UK are generally not sufficient for this to be of any major concern but be mindful of the accumulative effects of other UV sources such as sun beds or if you holiday abroad.

Abnormal reactions to sunlight

Some medicines contain photosensitising agents and can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. If you are taking any medication, always read the label and if you have any concerns, talk to your GP or pharmacist.

Some chemicals (such as dyes, wood preservatives, coal-tar and pitch products), can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. If you use any substances in the course of your work, then your manager or other designated person should have completed a CoSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) assessment. Make sure you are familiar with the CoSHH assessment for any products you handle in the course of your work. Understand the risks associated with the product and the control measures to take to protect yourself and others from any harmful effects.

The sap from some plants is photo reactive and can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight resulting in a rash or even quite painful blisters. Giant Hog Weed and Rue

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are two common examples, but this list is not exhaustive. Consider whether a site-specific risk assessment is required to identify dangerous plants where you are working.

3. Who is at risk?

Some people are more vulnerable than others. People with white skin are at most risk. Take particular care if you have:

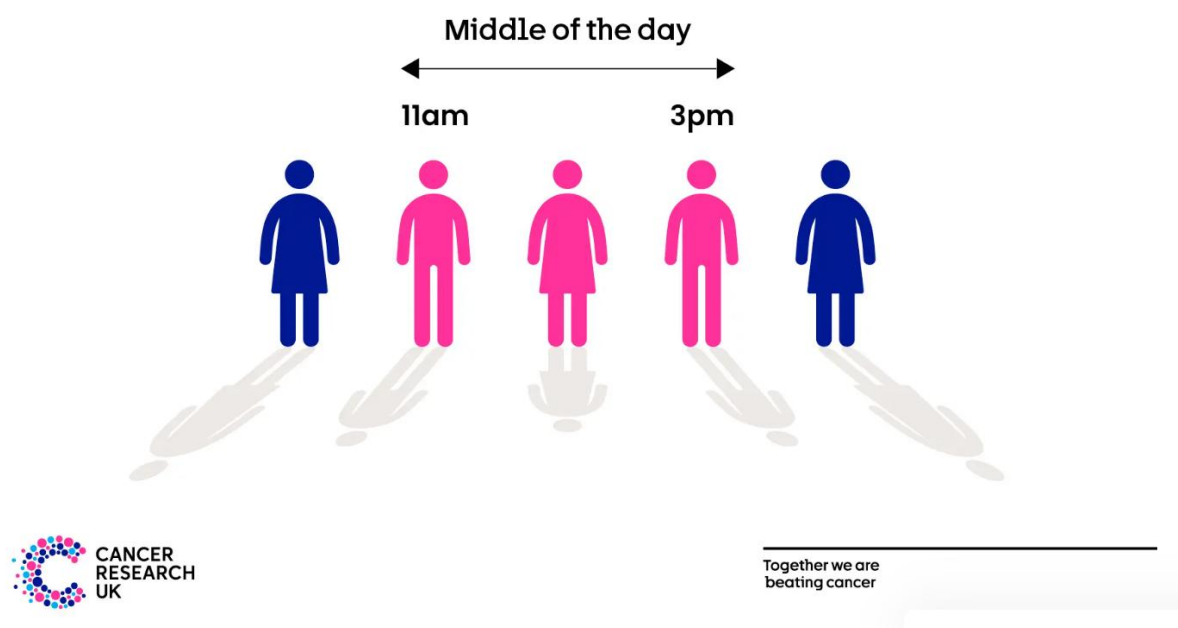
- Fair, freckled, or light brown skin that does not tan, or goes red or burns before it tans.
- Red or fair hair
- Light coloured eyes.
- Many moles.
- A personal or family history of skin cancer.

Dark skinned people may be slightly less at risk of sunburn but should still take care. Lower risk doesn't mean no risk. People with darker skin tones can still get sunburnt. And people of all skin tones can get skin cancer, so it's important for everyone to think about protecting their skin when the sun is strong. If your skin feels irritated, tender, or itchy, that's sunburn.

The Shadow Rule

Another handy tip to help you work out when the sun is strongest is the 'Shadow Rule'. It's simple and it works anywhere in the world.

Look at your shadow. If it is shorter than you, this means that the sun's UV rays are at their strongest – in the UK, this is usually the middle of the day between 11am and 3pm. This is when you're most likely to burn and need to think about taking extra care to protect your skin, especially if you get sunburnt easily.

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4. How to Protect Yourself

The best way to protect against sunlight is to avoid it where possible.

Whatever your skin type, you should take care when you are working outside in summer especially between 11 o'clock and 3 o'clock and particular care between 12 and 2 o'clock when the sun is strongest. (N.b. The sun is at its highest at 1 o'clock in summertime owing to changing the clocks to British Summer Time). Even on hazy days the UV rays can be damaging.

Try and arrange breaks and travelling time to avoid working outside during the hottest part of the day. If you cannot do so, then a *dynamic* or *point of work risk assessment* may be necessary to judge what other suitable controls are required.

Take your breaks in the shade.

Be mindful when there is a breeze as this will mask the burning effects from the sun.

Don't deliberately try and get a tan.

Avoid even the mild reddening of the skin which is an early sign of skin damage.

Clothing

If you must work outside, then cover up.

Dark coloured, closely woven fabrics are best.

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A short-sleeved top is adequate most of the time, but you should apply sunscreen to your forearms. A long-sleeved top is better. Some garments are rated with a sun protection factor (UPF), much like sun creams do.

Wearing long sleeved tops and trousers will also help protect against harmful vegetation, and insects.

When working on the highway it is a requirement to wear Class 3 Hi-Visibility garments. A long-sleeved top is therefore also necessary to accommodate the reflective bands on the sleeves.

Avoid loosely woven material as these can let sunlight through and you can still burn, through the fabric or else wear sunscreen under your clothing.

A hat, particularly one with a wide brim will shade the face and neck but might not always be appropriate (e.g., when working on the highway). A hard hat will offer adequate protection and a hanging flap at the back will protect the neck.

Sunglasses that provide UVA and UVB protection will help protect your eyes. If you do use sunglasses, ensure they do not prevent you seeing colours properly if this is important to your work e.g., when driving.

Sunscreens

Whilst clothing is the best form of protection, sunscreen creams and lotions are useful to protect parts of the body that are not easy to shade. E.g., face, neck and back of hands.

Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor of at least SPF30 to protect against UVB and a star rating of 4 or more to protect against UVA.

No sunscreen, no matter how high the factor, can offer 100 per cent protection so always read and follow the supplier's instructions.

Make sure to apply enough sunscreen – most people don't apply enough, which gives reduced protection.

Make sure to reapply frequently (at least every 2 hours, more often if carrying out any vigorous activity).

Allergies

While sunscreens are safe for most people, occasionally, people may suffer an allergic reaction, most commonly a rash.

If you experience a reaction from sunscreen, it's important to identify the underlying cause, rather than forego sunscreen altogether. You will need to use an alternative product that doesn't contain the allergen.

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Your GP can help you identify which substances you might be allergic to.

5. Check Your Skin

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the world. Non-melanoma skin cancer refers to a group of cancers that slowly develop in the upper layers of the skin.

The term non-melanoma distinguishes these more common types of skin cancer from the less common skin cancer known as melanoma, which can be more serious.

In the UK, around 147,000 new cases of non-melanoma skin cancer are diagnosed each year. It affects more men than women and is more common in the elderly.

Symptoms of non-melanoma cancer

The first sign of non-melanoma skin cancer is usually the appearance of a lump or discoloured patch on the skin that persists after a few weeks and slowly progresses over months or sometimes years. This is the cancer, or tumour.

In most cases, cancerous lumps are red and firm and sometimes turn into ulcers, while cancerous patches are usually flat and scaly.

Non-melanoma skin cancer most often develops on areas of skin regularly exposed to the sun, such as the face, ears, hands, shoulders, upper chest and back.

When to get medical advice

See a GP if you have any skin abnormality, such as a lump, ulcer, lesion, or skin discolouration that has not healed after 4 weeks. While it's unlikely to be skin cancer, it's best to get it checked.

Signs and symptoms of melanoma

Melanoma is a type of skin cancer that can spread to other organs in the body.

The most common sign of melanoma is the appearance of a new mole or a change in an existing mole.

This can happen anywhere on the body, but the most affected areas are the back in men and the legs in women.

Melanomas are uncommon in areas that are protected from sun exposure, such as the buttocks and the scalp.

In most cases, melanomas have an irregular shape and are more than 1 colour.

The mole may also be larger than normal and can sometimes be itchy or bleed.

Look out for a mole that gradually changes shape, size, or colour.

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6. Further Precautions to Take

Apart from sun burn, extreme heat caused by very sunny conditions can lead to other risks too.

Heat Exhaustion.

Heat exhaustion is caused by a loss of salt and water from the body, usually through excessive sweating. If someone sweats profusely, due to prolonged activity in very hot conditions then dehydration develops which can lead to heat exhaustion.

Heat Stroke

There are two main causes of Heat Stroke, but both are related to prolonged exposure to heat.

- i) A failure in the ‘thermostat’ in the brain which regulates body temperature. The body then becomes dangerously overheated.
- ii) Heat Stroke can also follow from heat exhaustion when severe dehydration causes sweating to cease thereby preventing the body from being able to cool itself down anymore.

Tell-tale signs of Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke include:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Cramps in the arms, legs, or stomach

If you start to experience these symptoms whilst working in very hot conditions, then you probably need to cool down. Stop working, seek shade and drink plenty of fluids.

Watch out for these symptoms in others as it can be hard to notice them in yourself since you start to feel confused.

7. Burn Risk Calculator

The burn risk calculator on [Appendix 1](#) will help you to calculate your level of risk.

SHAW51G – Working in Sunlight**8. Safe System of Work**

Where possible, arrange breaks and travelling to avoid unnecessary exposure to sunlight, especially during the middle of the day in high summer.

Take breaks in the shade.

Keep covered up. Wear a long-sleeved top even on the sunniest days.

Wear a hat.

Use a sunscreen to protect exposed skin.

Do not remain in direct sunlight unnecessarily. E.g., when waiting for someone else to complete a task before you can start.

Drink plenty of fluids, little and often is best. Try not to get to the stage when you feel thirsty, at this stage you are already beginning to dehydrate.

9. Knowledge, Equipment, Skills

Understand your skin type and your burn risk and act accordingly.

Understand the dangers of dehydration and the need to drink plenty of fluids.

10. Personal Responsibilities

Take your breaks in the shade.

Wear appropriate clothing for the task and weather conditions.

Apply and re-apply sunscreen as directed by the manufacturer's instructions for use.

Check your skin for unusual marks especially scabby, mole-like marks.

Watch out for symptoms of dehydration and Heat Exhaustion/Stroke in yourself and amongst colleagues.

11. Checklist

Have you checked the weather forecast for the UV index and calculated your burn risk?

Do you have appropriate clothing, hat, sunglasses, short or long-sleeved top as appropriate?

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Can the work be scheduled to avoid the need to work outside during the hottest part of the day?

Have you applied sunscreen? Do you have spare to take with you to re-apply?

Do you have water or other soft drinks available?

12. Websites:

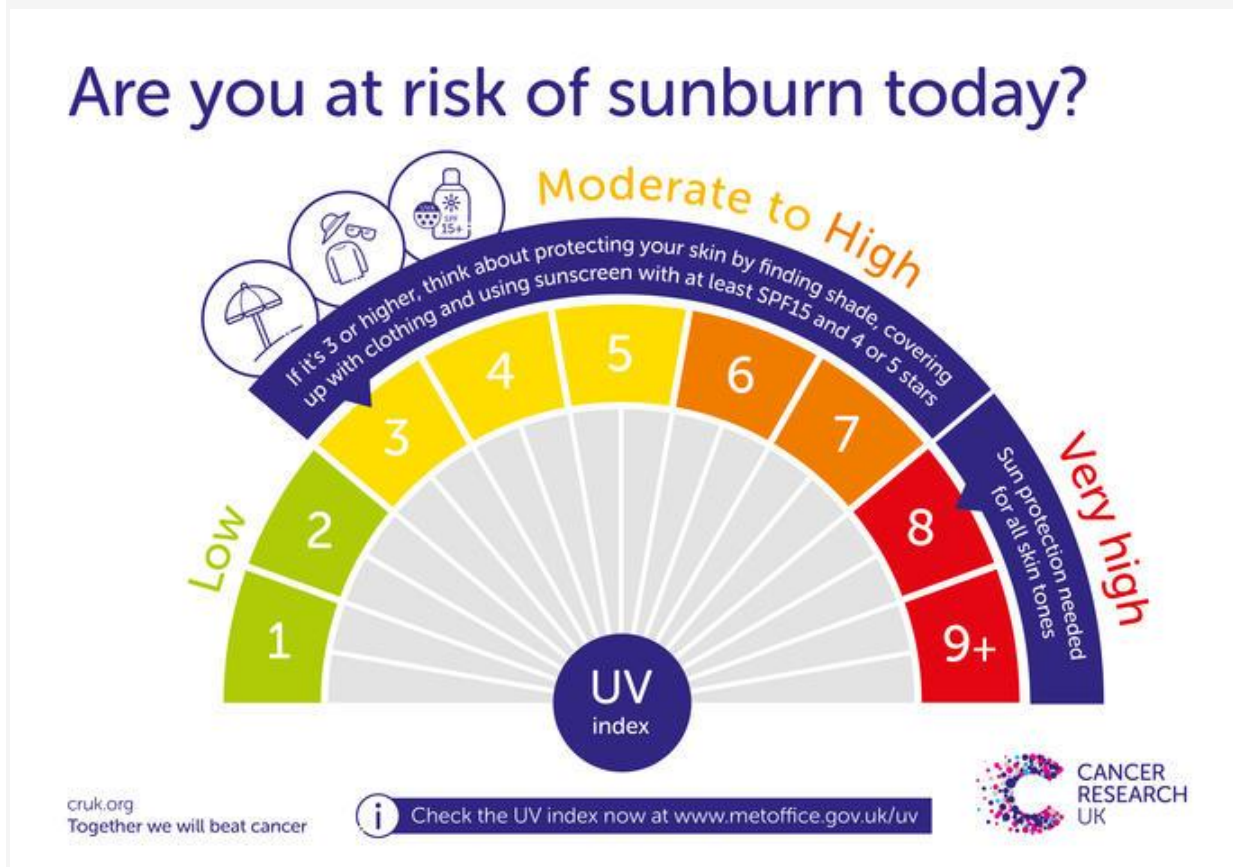
HSE Leaflet	<i>INDG147</i>	<u>Keep your top on – Health risks from working in the sun</u>
HSE	<i>Web site</i>	Skin at work: Outdoor workers and sun exposure
Cancer Research UK	<i>Web site</i>	<u>Sun, UV and cancer</u>
NHS	<i>Web site</i>	<u>Sunscreen and sun safety</u>
National Institute of Care and Excellence (NICE)	<i>Guidance document</i>	<u>Sunlight exposure: communicating the benefits and risks to the general public</u>
British Safety Council	<i>Web site</i>	<u>Working in the sun: why it's time to take action</u>

13. Burn Risk Calculator

The UV index

The UV index tells us how strong the sun's UV rays are and when we might be at risk of burning. The higher the value, the greater the risk of sunburn and the less time it takes to damage your skin.

When the UV Index is 3 or more, the sun is strong enough to cause damage for some skin types so take care and protect your skin, especially if you burn easily.



UV ratings explained

UV 1-2

Low exposure. No sun protection needed.

UV 3-5

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Moderate exposure. Think about sun protection, especially between 11am-3pm.

UV 6-7

High exposure. Skin protection needed for most skin tones.

UV 8-9+

Very high exposure. Skin protection needed for all skin tones.

Check the [UV index forecast \(external link\)](#) for different parts of the UK on the Met Office website.

Safety, Health, and Wellbeing Guidance Working Indoors in Extreme Hot Weather

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Consulted - Corporate Building Coordinator	John Coleman	13 Jul 26
Consulted – HR Head of Employee Relations & Payroll	Daisy Rea	14 Jul 26
Advised	SHAW Board	27 Aug 26

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All Staff - IRIS	Suffolk County Council

Review Period

Date Policy to be Reviewed	By whom
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1 Introduction

This guidance is primarily for working indoors; in offices, libraries and similar workplaces. [Employees](#) who work outdoors should also refer to the guidance on [Working in Sunlight](#).

There is no legal maximum temperature for indoor workplaces. This is because there are other factors that influence how hot conditions feel and the impact they have on individuals, including humidity, air movement and the nature of the work being undertaken. It is difficult therefore, to define a single temperature that would be appropriate in all circumstances. For this reason, we have written guidance, instead of a policy.

The Workplace Regulations and the associated [Approved Code of Practice](#), does however stipulate that the temperature of indoor workspaces needs to be ‘reasonable’, and if that is not possible, owing to extreme hot weather, then “all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a temperature which is as close as possible to comfortable.”

Be mindful that individuals experience heat differently. Some [employees](#) may be more susceptible to the effects of heat and heat stress, including those who are perimenopausal or menopausal, have underlying health conditions, are pregnant, or are taking medication that affects their ability to regulate body temperature. Managers should consider individual circumstances when assessing risks and implementing control measures.

2 Things the Premises Manager can do

2.1 Air conditioning

- **In premises with air conditioning**, adjust it to take account of the forecasted hot weather.
- Ideally, set the indoor temperature to between 21 – 23°
- Adjust the mix of recycled and incoming air to minimise bringing in too much hot air from outside and to preserve the already cooled air from being expelled.
- Set the humidity to not exceed 70%. Ideally aim to keep it between 40 – 60%

N.b. In extreme conditions it may be necessary to set the temperature a little higher than ideal, so as not to overwork the system and cause it to fail.

2.2 Electrical Equipment

- Turn off unnecessary electrical equipment, that might be producing heat, e.g. computer terminals, photocopiers or printers that aren’t being used and are just in standby mode.

2.3 Blinds and curtains

- Draw blinds and curtains, especially on the south (sunny) side of the building.
- Keep them closed during the day
- Make sure they are closed when leaving off at night to prevent solar gain from heating up the space before work starts in the morning.

2.4 Windows and doors

- **In buildings without air conditioning**, open windows on the north (shady) side of the building to encourage air flow.
- If there is someone in first thing in the morning (e.g a Premises Responsible Person or caretaker) it's advisable that they go round and open all available windows early in the day, before the workplace gets too hot.
- Do not prop open fire doors unless they are fitted with magnetic locks, which can automatically close if the fire alarm is activated.

2.5 Fans

- In SCC buildings, provide electric fans to help encourage air movement. N.b., we do not propose to provide fans for people working from home.
- In buildings with air conditioning, fans may be required to supplement the air conditioning.
- Plan ahead. Hot summers are becoming the norm. In the Spring, consider what fans might be needed before Summer arrives.

N.b. if it's hotter indoors, than out, fans pointing towards open windows can help expel hot air.

3 Things line managers can do

- Where feasible, enable employees to make use of the cooler parts of the building for work or rest breaks.
- Consider how flexible working arrangements can be used to reduce exposure to heat, for example by enabling earlier start times and regular breaks throughout the day.
- Where operationally possible, existing hybrid and flexible working arrangements should be used to help manage the effects of extreme heat. This may include adjusting team office days, making use of cooler workspaces, including home working where appropriate, and minimising unnecessary travel. Any

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arrangements should remain consistent with the [Hybrid Working Policy](#), [Flexible Working Policy](#) and service requirements.

- Make allowances for those who experience heat stress more acutely.
- Where appropriate, relax some dress codes, such as not requiring a jacket or tie, whilst still maintaining professional standards. N.b. some attire is not appropriate for the office, such a crop tops or open toed shoes in certain settings.
- If working in a public facing environment, consider reducing the service offered on hotter days, and allow public some way of filling up water bottles. (if feasible)
- If events/activities are planned, consider the facilities available and potential attendees (vulnerable etc) and consider changing the time of event or postponing/cancelling it until the weather is more comfortable.

4 Things staff can do for themselves

- Keep well hydrated. Drink plenty of water, little and often throughout the day. (N.b. water is much better than caffeinated drinks which are diuretics and will encourage you to pass urine more quickly and to dehydrate.
- Assist in keeping blinds and/or curtains drawn during the day
- Draw blinds and/or curtains when you leave the office / premises
- Avoid extreme exercise.

N.b. If you bring a fan in from home, it must be PAT testing before using it in a SCC premises.

5 Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke

Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke are medical conditions that can occur during prolonged exposure to heat.

Heat exhaustion or heat stroke are unlikely to occur in offices, libraries etc, unless you are also doing strenuous activity. But might occur where there is also some heat producing activity such as catering kitchens, working in a boiler room etc.

Be mindful of the symptoms to watch out for.

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke
• tiredness • dizziness • headache	• a very high temperature • hot skin without sweating • fast breathing and a fast heartbeat

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• feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting) • excessive sweating and skin becoming pale and clammy (a change in skin colour can be harder to see on brown or black skin) • cramps in the arms, legs and stomach • a high temperature • being very thirsty • feeling irritable	• confusion and restlessness • seizure (fit) • loss of consciousness
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Watch out for these symptoms in colleagues as it is difficult to notice them in yourself, as you might feel disorientated once the symptoms begin.

People most at risk include:

- Children
- the elderly
- pregnant women
- people with long term health conditions such as diabetes or a heart condition.

For the symptoms of **heat exhaustion**, get the person to a cool place. Remove unnecessary clothing e.g. a jacket and socks. Give them plenty of water to drink. Cool them with a spray or a wet sponge or a fan. If symptoms don't improve within 30 minutes, call 111.

Heat Stroke is a serious condition. If anyone is showing symptoms of heat stroke, treat as for heat exhaustion and seek medical help by calling 999.

6 Glossary

Employees – means anyone in the employment of SCC, whether full or part time, including casual workers and sessional workers or volunteers.

7 Links, References & Further Information

Websites:

[Temperature in the workplace: Is it too hot or cold to work? - HSE](#)

[Heatwave: how to cope in hot weather - NHS](#)