



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®
The Lifeguarding Experts

POSITION STATEMENT

SUN PROTECTION & WORKING IN HOT ENVIRONMENTS

The Lifesaving Society encourages lifeguards to protect themselves from dehydration, heat exhaustion/heat stroke, and long-term skin damage, including non-melanoma and melanoma skin cancer, by:

- Covering up: Wear a wide-brimmed hat that covers the face and neck, but does not reduce visibility. Wear polarized sunglasses that reduce glare from water reflection.
- Use sunscreen: Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before exposure to sun, and re-apply every two hours.
- Seek shade: Shade is a great source of sun protection. Umbrellas or canopies are a great source of shade. Seek shade especially between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the intensity of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays is greatest.
- Hydration: Drinking water regularly.
- Regular breaks: Rotate positions and take breaks regularly.

BACKGROUND:

Years ago, lifeguards were the icons of sun-seeking, bronzed Albertans and Northerners. Clothing was minimal, shade was non-existent, and a dark tan was a source of pride. Today, many lifeguards continue to spend much of their working day in the sun. However, lifeguards are also the new model for healthy, active living under the sun. Skin cancer and heat illnesses are highly preventable.

RATIONALE:

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 are part of an occupational group known to be at increased risk for high intensity UV exposure. Sun protection for aquatic staff is also a requirement of the Lifesaving Society's Safety Standards for public pools and beaches.

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RATIONALE (CONT):

There are resources available that can help you support and promote sun protection:

- Check out the Canadian Skin Cancer Foundation website for their Sun Safety Education.
- View the Lifeguard Sun Safety Fact Sheet for tips on how to protect yourself.
- Take a look at Alberta Health Services program ‘Be Sunsible’ on protecting outdoor workers with personal protective equipment.

Together, aquatic facility managers and lifeguards are uniquely suited to promote sun safety. As a team, you can influence behaviour change by role modeling sun protection for swimmers. 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.

DEFINITIONS:

Lifeguard: A person holding a current Lifesaving Society National Lifeguard certification appointed by the owner or owner’s agent to maintain bather surveillance.

REFERENCES:

1. Canadian Skin Cancer Foundation, Source: <https://www.canadianskincancerfoundation.com/sun-safety/>
2. Alberta Health Services, Be Sunsible, Source: <https://besunsible.healthiertogether.ca/>
3. Lifesaving Society Canada, Canadian First Aid Manual (Up-dated with the 2015 CPR guidelines).

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