

# Study examines occupational sun-safety policies for local government workers in Colorado

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Few local government organizations in Colorado had policies on environmental controls, such as the provision of outdoor shade, or administrative procedures, including training and resource allocation, to improve sun protection for their workers and most policies addressed employees' use of personal protection practices, according to an article published online by *JAMA Dermatology*.

Outdoor workers are exposed to large amounts of UV radiation, often during the course of many years, and are at increased risk for skin cancer and ocular (eye) damage. Sun-safety policies have the potential to increase sun protection and [skin cancer](#) prevention remains a national priority. Workplaces are ideal locations to promote sun safety because many [outdoor workers](#) fail to use sun-safety practices, according to the study background.

Barbara J. Walkosz, Ph.D., of Klein Buendel Inc., Golden, Colo., and coauthors examined occupational sun-safety practices in 98 local government organizations in Colorado.

Overall, 85 of 98 local government organizations (87 percent) had policies that addressed at least one sun-safety content area. However, few had policies on [environmental controls](#) and administrative procedures to improve sun protection (12 percent) and most policies addressed employees' personal protection practices. Few employers

supplied sun-protection equipment; for example, 16 employers included sunscreen use in their policies but only three provided it to their employees, according to the results.

Most of the existing policies regarding personal sun protection practices also did not specifically state that the intent was to protect employees from excessive sun exposure: only eight hat policies (8 percent; six allowed and two required hats), seven clothing policies (7 percent; four allowed and three required protective clothing) and 10 eyewear policies (10 percent; four allowed and six required protective eyewear) mentioned sun protection.

"The policies of local government organizations may increase [sun protection](#) in occupational settings. Unfortunately, occupational sun-safety policies remain uncommon among these organizations.

Opportunities exist for dermatologists and physicians to have an effect on occupational practices and policies concerning sun safety, which are consistent with other safety procedures and could easily be integrated into existing workplace practices," the study concludes.

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