

# 5 key summer hazards

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While heat-related hazards deserve particular attention during the summer months (see 5 Ways to Prevent Heat Stress), many other hazards may be present during outdoor work. For example, biological hazards such as insects and plants, or musculoskeletal disorders from equipment use are also prevalent. Here are five hazards that could affect your workers during the summer months and how you can manage them.



1. **UV radiation.** Work-related cancers related to exposure to ultraviolet A and B radiation are on the rise. A recent study by the Institute for Work & Health puts the annual economic burden of work-related non-melanoma cancers in Canada at \$35 million.\* "If exposure to UV light is an innate hazard of your workplace, it's important to build remedies into safe work practices," says Charmaine Mitchell, WSPS Account Manager. "Don't work in the hottest part of the day, don't go out without a hat, sunscreen, or appropriate clothing, and take frequent breaks."
2. **Biological hazards.** These include exposure to insects, poisonous plants, animals, syringes, etc. Workers at risk include farmers, landscapers, and golf course employees, many of whom may be new, young and temporary. "Ticks, which can cause Lyme disease, are a huge concern right now," says Charmaine. "Workers who may be exposed need to wear long sleeves, long pants, shoes and socks, and use the proper repellent. Other biological hazards require their own safe work practices."
3. **Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).** Injuries to muscles, tendons, nerves, ligaments and more can result from fixed and awkward positions, heavy lifting, repetitive tasks, vibration, etc. "Just look at landscaping, which can involve tasks such as weeding, planting, pruning, trimming, building fences, excavating, and more," says Charmaine. Any of them can put workers at risk of developing MSDs.
4. **Chemicals.** Many outdoor tasks involve using chemicals, such as pesticides. Workers need to know which personal protective equipment to use to prevent contact with skin and eyes, how to apply the pesticide safely, what to do if they inhale or ingest it, how to dispose of it, and more. This information is available on WHMIS safety data sheets (SDSs), which must be available to workers at all times.
5. **Equipment.** Make sure equipment is guarded to protect against pinchpoints, shearpoints, freewheeling parts, etc, and that employees are operating it according to safe work practices and wearing the proper personal protective equipment. All workers, and new and young summer employees in particular, need to understand the hazards associated with equipment use.

## How we can help

Check out our extensive collection of resources, downloads, training related to equipment, MSDs, agriculture safety, WHMIS, biological safety, and developing safe work practices.

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### Reference

\* *IWH study estimates costs of non-melanoma skin cancers due to sun exposure at work*