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When is it too hot to work?

With the current spike in summer temperatures in the UK, the question 'When is it too hot to work?' is one that employers find themselves being asked repeatedly.

The HSE has recently released information based on this advice and has confirmed that there is no law regarding the maximum working temperature or, indeed, when it is too hot to work.

Nevertheless, employers must adhere to health and safety law by maintaining temperature/s at a comfortable level (also known as thermal comfort) and by providing access to clean and fresh air.

What contributes to an unsuitable temperature in the workplace?

There are six basic factors known to cause discomfort in unsuitable temperatures in the workplace, combining a range of environmental and personal elements. Further information on these available below:

- › [HSE - Thermal comfort: The six basic factors](#)
- › [HSE - Thermal comfort: Employee's guide - temperature.](#)

Consideration should also be given to workplaces where extreme temperatures are not seasonal but are a direct result of the operations taking place. These are environments where, regardless of the weather, temperatures can lead to serious health issues such as heat stress, cold stress or dehydration. If their workplace temperature is not comfortable, employees should talk to their employer.

What are the health risks associated with short and long-term sun exposure?

It is important to recognise that heat is not the only factor that can lead to health concerns. At this time of year, exposure to ultraviolet rays (UV) in the sunlight can lead to both skin and eye damage. In the short

term, even a mild reddening of the skin from sun exposure is a sign of damage, which in turn can lead to symptoms such as blistering and peeling of the skin. Meanwhile, long-term exposure can lead to early ageing and, in some instances, skin cancer.

How can employees protect themselves against sun exposure?

The easiest methods of protection against sun damage are as follows:

- › Keep arms and legs covered – wear long sleeve tops and full leg trousers
- › Wear a hat with a brim that covers both the ears and the back of the neck or, if on a hard hat site, wear additional neck protection



- › Wear appropriate eye protection to ward off glare or high intensity sunlight
- › Stay in the shade as much as possible, especially on breaks
- › Use a high factor sunscreen on exposed skin – a minimum of SPF15
- › Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration
- › Check your skin regularly for unusual moles or spots and see your doctor promptly if you notice any anomalies.

How can SOCOTEC help?

SOCOTEC provides a comprehensive range of health and safety consultancy and advisory services, helping your business to keep compliant and offering solutions-drive services to meet your individual requirements. [Click here](#) or [get in touch](#).