

Sun Safe Workspace #1: Overview of Florida's Tailored Sun Safety Extension Program for Outdoor Professionals¹

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Introduction

In the United States, approximately 32 million people are employed in outdoor-focused jobs (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). The National Center for Farmworker Health estimates that there are 2.9 million *agricultural workers* in the United States (2022). Outdoor professionals, including but not limited to construction, farming, transportation, and Extension professionals (e.g., agriculturists, master gardeners, animal scientists), are employed in a variety of settings. In Florida, approximately 600,000 jobs are among outdoor professionals (Tsoukalas, 2025).

Outdoor professionals experience daily exposure to ultraviolet light (UVA and UVB rays) from the sun while at work. Exposure to the sun's rays without protection can put outdoor professionals at increased risk for sun damage, skin cancer, and other heat-related illnesses (Islami et al., 2024). Rays from the sun can begin to cause cellular damage in only 15 minutes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025). Additionally, having just five sunburns increases one's skin cancer risk (Skin Cancer Foundation, 2025).

Melanoma is a form of skin cancer. New cases of melanoma are diagnosed in Florida at rates slightly higher than the national rate (State Cancer Profiles, 2021). To address the health needs of Floridians, Sun Safe Workspace was developed and offered by UF/IFAS Extension professionals. This tailored program aims to fill an identified gap in cancer prevention programming through classroom or community learning (Figure 1).

Education about how to reduce UV exposure risk focuses on outdoor professionals, but it can be used with any group who may benefit from information about sun protection. Sun Safe Workspace provides facts and statistics on risk factors and strategies to protect your skin and eyes from the harmful effects of the sun. Most people can benefit from the simple skills taught in the program. Infographics about symptoms of unsafe sun exposure and

conducting skin self-exams are additional resources that help educate groups of learners.

Worker health is an important topic within the scope of public health (Krisberg, 2024). Supporting sun protection practices at worksites (e.g., scheduling shade breaks, wearing protective clothing, applying sunscreen/sunblock, and other environmental changes) all contribute to skin cancer prevention. In addition, Sun Safe Workspace provides sun safety education and resources about UV exposure and heat-related illnesses that can help mitigate annual income losses for workers and employers.

This series is intended for audiences who work with outdoor professionals. The goal is to provide information and resources on the negative effects of UV exposure and to implement consistent sun safety practices.

Publications in This Series

1. Sun Safe Workspace #1: Overview of Florida's Tailored Sun Safety Extension Program for Outdoor Professionals
2. Sun Safe Workspace #2: Infographics and Graphical Elements
3. Sun Safe Workspace #3: Interactive Elements to Support Learning Outcomes among Community Learners — Wood's Table Lamp, UV Filtered Cameras, and More
4. Sun Safe Workspace #4: Community Engagement with Florida's Workforce
5. Sun Safe Workspace #5: Program Objectives, Learning Outcomes, and Evaluation Plan
6. Sun Safe Workspace #6: Extension Populations and Priority Audiences, from Sea Grant to Farms and Horticulture
7. Sun Safe Workspace #7: Health Communication Campaigns and Sun Safety



Figure 1. Extension state specialist delivers a Sun Safety workshop to landscapers and pesticide applicators at the UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County office. The workshop became the precursor to the fully tailored Sun Safe Workspace Extension program. Credit: Nelly Nelson, UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County

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