

The sunny days of spring and summer represent an entirely different dynamic for people in the midwest.

While large numbers of people are heading for camp sites, parks and beaches that flourish throughout the region, it also means that the agriculture community—the farmers and ranchers—are hard at work in the fields and on rangeland.

This means that the risk will increase for those spending more time in the sun.

Farmers and ranchers face a range of occupational hazards—from machinery accidents and chemical exposures from fertilizers and pesticides, to injuries from working with animals.

A less visible danger comes from the sun's ultraviolet rays, which can damage skin, leading to skin cancer, premature aging of the skin, and suppression of the immune system.

“Ultraviolet radiation is a serious threat to our health and especially to the health of those who make a living outside in the fields and on the rangeland in our region,” EPA Region 7 Administrator Karl Brooks said.

“The increased threat faced during the long and hot summer days of the heartland makes it imperative that we remember sun safety this summer.”

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S. and the most common cancer among 20 to 30-year-olds.

It's estimated that one American dies every hour from melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. Approximately 76,000 new cases of melanoma will occur this year.

To help protect people's health, EPA's SunWise program, one of the nation's largest environmental and health education programs, encourages kids and their caregivers to practice safe sun habits and raises awareness about UV sunlight that penetrates the Earth's ozone layer.

Here are some tips to help Americans continue to exercise, get outside and be SunWise this summer:

- Check the UV Index app: Check the ultraviolet (UV) index anytime by downloading EPA's app ([epa.gov/enviro/mobile](http://epa.gov/enviro/mobile)) to help plan outdoor activities in ways that prevent overexposure to the sun. UV rays from the sun (and from artificial light sources such as tanning beds) can lead to skin cancer.

- Apply sunscreen and wear protective clothing: Apply a palm-full of sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher that provides broad-spectrum protection from both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays to exposed skin about 15 minutes before heading outdoors.

Reapply every two hours. Wearing protective clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses also prevents sun damage.

- Seek shade, not sun: The sun's UV rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., so seek shade during this time.

- Although less common in individuals with darker complexions, skin cancer does not discriminate and is more often fatal for individuals with darker skin.

Overexposure to the sun also causes immune suppression and up to 90 percent of wrinkles, brown spots, leathering of the skin and sagging.