

Road workers and skin cancer

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IN HOT WEATHER or cold, sun or shade, anyone whose job requires working outdoors risks developing skin cancer due to overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. Road workers are among the highest at-risk groups. Some workers may retire only to develop skin cancer years later due to the long-lasting, cumulative effects of UV exposure.

The challenge

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the country and its occurrence is increasing, according to the National Cancer Institute. Repeated, prolonged exposure to ultraviolet-A (UVA) and ultraviolet-B (UVB) rays, can cause melanoma and carcinoma, the two primary types of cancer affecting the skin.

Skin cancer often affects people who are fair-skinned, burn easily, or have had one or more severe, blistering sunburns. But it's a mistake to think you're safe just because your olive skin tans easily. People of all hues can develop skin cancer.

Carcinoma, the most common skin cancer, begins in particular cells in the outer layer of the skin. Carcinoma rarely metastasizes (spreads to other organs).

Although a less common form of skin cancer than carcinoma, *melanoma* is one of the most common cancers in young adults—and it is life threatening. It begins when skin cells that produce melanin, the pigment that gives skin its natural color, become malignant, and it tends to spread to other organs if not treated early.

Protect yourself

Whenever you're working (or playing) outdoors, protect yourself. Wear a hat that shields not only your head from the sun but your ears and neck as well, plus long-sleeved shirts, gloves, and long pants. *In addition*, always use sunscreen.

Road workers should choose a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 25 or 30 and "broad-spectrum" protection to screen out both UVB and UVA rays. Apply sunscreen liberally and reapply every two hours—more often if you're sweating.

"Sunblock" is the same as "sunscreen." No skin product can actually block the sun's rays from contacting exposed skin.

Whenever possible, avoid working outdoors during mid-day when the sun's rays are most direct.

Treatment

Carcinoma can generally be treated by removing affected skin tissue. The procedure may leave some slight scarring.

If left untreated, carcinomas can become enlarged and destroy surrounding tissue. In rare cases, the cancer can spread to other parts of the body including bones, liver, and brain.

Melanoma can be cured if it is diagnosed and treated when the tumor is thin and has not deeply invaded the skin. Treatment includes surgical

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Skin cancer signals

Check your skin regularly and, if you have a suspicious area, see a dermatologist immediately.

Carcinoma. Pay attention to any of these irregularities:

- small bumps, often on the nose or ear, or flaky, scabby patches on the skin, which then become bumps, usually with an abscess
- red to flesh color
- firm and rubbery texture
- waxy or translucent appearance

Melanoma. Often, the first sign of melanoma is a change in the size, shape, color, or feel of an existing mole.

In addition, the American Academy of Dermatology has developed a simple, ABCD method for determining if a spot on the skin might be a melanoma. A skin irregularity may be a melanoma if

- Asymmetrical shape (one half looks different from the other)
- Border is jagged, notched, or scalloped
- Color ranges from pink to red to dark brown, often together
- Diameter is larger than six millimeters (about the width of a pencil eraser)

E.Z. simplifies hauling, unloading pipe rack

UNLOADING long, heavy culvert pipes from a roof rack can be difficult for one person. Pat Zimmerman, culvert and drainage foreman in Johnson County Secondary Roads, has designed and built a solution—an E.Z. rack.

The E.Z. rack is an adaptation of a standard roof rack. On the E.Z. rack, the outside tines will drop 90 degrees and lay parallel to the ground when it's time to unload. Just give a pipe a push, and it drops to the ground.

To build the E.Z. rack, Zimmerman used 1 1/2-inch square tubing. He replaced the roof rack's original outside tines with longer ones (they need to be long enough to keep the pipe being unloaded from dropping on the mirror) and added a pivot point and a stop. He made the right side of the rack large enough to handle culvert pipe up to 24 inches by 30 feet.

Both outside tines need to drop at the same time. They are controlled by a lever at the rear of the truck. The lever releases two spring-loaded pins, which hold the tines in their regular upright position.

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removal of the affected skin, perhaps in conjunction with chemotherapy, biological therapy, or radiation therapy.

However, when a melanoma becomes thick and deep, the disease often spreads to other parts of the body and is difficult to control.

For more information

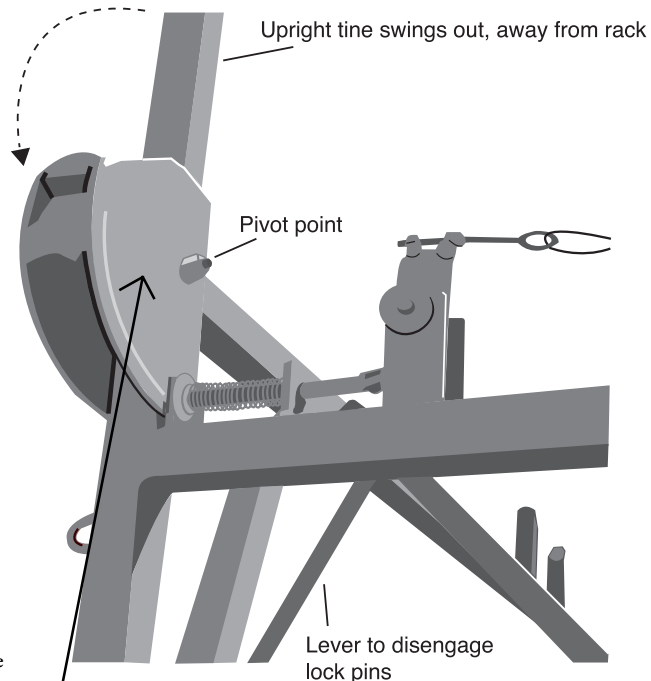
Some of the information in this article was found on the National Cancer Institute's excellent website, www.nci.nih.gov/CancerInformation/.

To contact a dermatologist in your area, contact the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), 888-462-DERM (3376), or visit the AAD website, www.aad.org.

Thanks to the International Slurry Surfacing Association Report for allowing us to adapt information from the May/June 1998 article, "Working Under the Sun: A Catch-22 for Road Workers." •

The E.Z. rack also eliminates the need for hitching up a trailer to transport culvert pipe. That saves hook-up time and fuel.

For more information about the E.Z. rack, contact Pat Zimmerman, 319-256-6046. •



The E.Z. rack tines have been lowered (top photo), and the rack is ready for its load. Once a pipe has been loaded (bottom photo), the tines are returned to their regular upright position.

