

SHADE FOR SPORTS GROUNDS AND FACILITIES

In Northern Ireland 2,500 people each year develop skin cancers and approximately 45 die annually. It is known that 80 - 90% of skin cancers are caused by over exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation primarily coming from the sun. By reducing people's exposure to UV radiation we can reduce the number of people affected by skin cancer in the future.

Why Shade for Outdoor Sports?

Reducing exposure to UV radiation among people involved in sport and recreation we can make a significant contribution to the prevention of skin cancer because:

- Numerous people are involved in outdoor activities either as participants, volunteers, officials, parents or spectators.
- Participation is highest during childhood and adolescence and minimising over exposure during this time reduces the lifetime risk of skin cancer.
- Outdoor sport and recreation activities often occur during peak UV times, 11am to 3pm.
- Many sporting activities take place in locations where there is very little or no shade present.
- Many activities take place in areas where there are high levels of reflected UV radiation of light coloured surfaces such as concrete or water.
- Participants often wear minimal clothing.
- Spectators are often poorly prepared for a potentially long period of sun exposure or weather conditions can change over the period of the activity.

The need for shade is generally high in sports grounds and facilities. Participants in outdoor activities have often little choice but to endure exposure to potentially high levels of UV radiation for extended periods of time. A well-designed area of shade can afford a cool protected area during the summer sun and a shelter from rain in poorer weather. Increasing comfort in the long-term can lead to an increase in support and participation at all levels.

Sun protection should be an important issue for all organisations involved in outdoor activities as part of the duty of care to all participants.

Providing adequate shade is an important element to include in any sport and recreation organisation's policy and practices. However shade alone cannot provide total protection. Wherever possible other sun protection measures should be encouraged:

- Avoid peak UV radiation times between 11am and 3pm;
- Ensure sports clothing considers UV protection, consider light weight, tight weave fabrics and inclusion of hats that adequately shade face, neck, ears and face;
- Use sunscreens with a minimum SPF of 15, broad-spectrum and apply as per the manufacturers instructions, incorrect application can greatly reduce effectiveness.

Planning for Shade

The following issues should be considered when reviewing sun safety and planning shade provision:

Existing Shade: Ensure areas of existing shade are available for use; relocate seating areas to shaded areas.

Maximise shade usage: Focus on providing shade in locations where it will have most effect such as spectator areas, competitions areas, refreshment areas and entrances.

Seasonal variations: Shade structures can be designed to provide protection from rain and wind adding to comfort all year round.

Indirect UV radiation: Design structures that minimise indirect or reflected UV radiation by using surfaces that reduce surface reflection for example replace cement with brick or grass.

Aesthetics: Shade structures should be both attractive and practical.

Shade in the right place: Take expert advice when placing shade to ensure that it is provided where it is needed, at the right time of day and right time of year.

Natural shade: Plant trees or shrubs with the aim of improving the environment and providing additional shade, temporary shade structures can be used until the plants have grown sufficiently.

Special Events: Portable structures should be made available, often such structures can double up as protection from the rain. Offer the use of portable structures as part of the ground /facility-hire package.

Always consider the safety of the shade structure to be developed.