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Media Release

Male outdoor workers urged to “Cover Up, Mate” as skin cancer in men continues to rise

Male outdoor workers urged to “Cover Up, Mate” as skin cancer in men continues to rise. Men who spend long periods of time outdoors are being urged to protect themselves against the sun this summer amid a rise in the number of people being diagnosed with skin cancer in the South West.

Farmers, builders, sportsmen and gardeners are all being targeted by NHS England South’s “Cover Up, Mate” campaign because of their prolonged exposure to the sun – and men are a particular focus because research indicates that they are much less likely than women to slap on the sunscreen.

Latest statistics from Cancer Research show that since the late 1970s, skin cancer incidence rates have more than quadrupled (360% increase) in Great Britain; this increase is larger in males, than in females.

Many local areas across the South West have higher rates of malignant melanoma than the national average (data by local authority below).

Dr Tim Craft, Medical Director, at Royal United Hospital, Bath said:

“We support this campaign as it’s important that people take a safer approach to the sun. Figures show that the incidence of malignant melanoma in Bath and North East Somerset is 37.94% higher than the national average.

“Being outdoors is clearly crucial for farmers, builders, gardeners, Post Office workers and others therefore, we want to reinforce the message and remind people there are simple steps that can be taken to lower the risk of skin cancer and be sun safe. Men in particular need to take much more care. They need to use at least factor 15 sunscreen and apply it generously on all exposed skin – not forgetting their necks, ears and bald patches!

“Sunburn increases your risk of skin cancer which can develop slowly over time. So while sunburn might feel better in a few days, it may have done long term damage which could be fatal.”

National Farmers Union South West Regional Board Chairman, James Small, said:

“Working in the rough, tough world of farming, we often want to brush things off and just get on with the job, but there are times when that kind of resilience can come back and bite you and this is one of those.

“We owe it to ourselves and our families to take the risk of skin cancer seriously and above all if we are bothered by something to not dismiss it, but get it checked out.”

Top sun safe tips include:



- Use at least factor 15 sunscreen in the sun and use plenty of it
- Apply sunscreen to all exposed skin – don't forget your neck and ears and your head if you have thinning or no hair
- Wear sunglasses and a hat
- Take particular care if have fair skin, moles or freckles, red or fair hair, or light-coloured eyes.

Official NHS Choices advice on sun safety can be found here. [Insert link: http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/skin/Pages/Sunsafer.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/skin/Pages/Sunsafer.aspx)

Ends

- Latest statistics from Public Health England show that in the South West there was a 31.9% rise in incidence of malignant melanoma between 2009 and 2014, from 1,444 cases to 1,906 cases. There was also a 14.5% rise in mortality from malignant melanoma, from 248 deaths in 2009 to 284 deaths in 2014.
- The campaign will include social media activity using #CoverUpMate.
- Public Health England data on incidence and mortality of malignant melanoma in the South West.

	South East incidence of malignant melanoma	South East deaths from malignant melanoma
2009	2,002	349
2014	2,661	420
Total rise	659	71
% rise	32.9	20.3

	South West incidence of malignant melanoma	South West deaths from malignant melanoma
2009	1,444	248
2014	1,906	284
Total rise	462	36
% rise	31.9	14.5

- All age incidence of malignant melanoma (direct age standardisation) per 100,000 population, by local authority, 2010-12 (–ve figure denotes it is below England average):

Area Name	% above national average
Bath and North East Somerset	37.94
Bristol	6.90
North Somerset	40.07
Wiltshire	27.47
Somerset	44.40