Almost 70 percent of construction field workers (68 percent) spend more than six hours a day in the sun between May and September, according to a survey conducted by Job-Site Supervisor, a construction field management newsletter published by FMI.

Of 1,850 surveys mailed, responses were compiled from 316 surveys representing all types of contracting companies. Of those who responded, 55 percent work for general contractors, 40 percent work for subcontractors and 5 percent work for another type of construction company. Twenty-one percent of those who responded are project managers, 20 percent are superintendents, 4 percent are foremen, and 55 percent identified themselves as another title, such as safety manager, vice president or president. Most of the companies (44 percent) employ more than 101 people, 20 percent work for companies with 26 to 50 people, 14 percent work for companies with 76 to 100 employees, 12 percent work for companies with 51 to 75 employees, and 10 percent work for companies with fewer than 25 employees.

Protecting skin from the sun is a key factor in preventing sun damage. From the 460 responses in this protection category (respondents could choose more than one response), survey results show some construction workers protect themselves from the sun. Personal protection equipment, such as W clothing and W sunglasses, is popular among field workers: 45 percent reported that field workers use some form of PPE to protect themselves from the sun. However, not as many are slathering on the sunscreen. Twenty-seven percent of respondents said field workers use sunscreen to protect
themselves from the sun, 19 percent do not protect themselves from the sun, 5 percent limit their time in the sun, 1 percent receive yearly cancer screenings, and 2 percent protect themselves in another way.

When asked about the type of PPE field workers are using to protect themselves from the sun, 19 percent do not protect themselves from the sun, 5 percent limit their time in the sun, 1 percent receive yearly cancer screenings, and 2 percent protect themselves in another way.

When asked about the type of PPE

An overwhelming number said that field workers wear hard hats to protect themselves from the sun. Others said they take other measures: long-sleeved shirts, long pants, UV protective sunglasses, baseball caps, UV-resistant clothing.

wear hard hats to protect themselves from the sun. Fifteen percent cited other PPE, such as long-sleeved shirts, long pants, W protective sunglasses and baseball caps, and 7 percent said field workers are wearing W-resistant clothing to protect from the sun.

Half of construction companies hold safety talks about the sun’s harmful effects, while 21 percent do nothing at all to warn workers about sun damage. Nineteen percent of companies provide sun-exposure literature for workers, 8 percent rely on personal protective equipment instructions, and 2 percent inform workers about sun exposure through other means, such as company or insurance newsletters.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (80 percent) believed that no field workers in their companies had been diagnosed with skin cancer; 13 percent said field workers at their company had been

The March/April 1999 issue of Job-Site Supervisor features the complete survey results and other safety articles, including an in-depth look at skin cancer and construction field workers.

About the Author

Jennifer Braico is the managing editor of Job-Site Supervisor. FMI is the nation’s largest management consulting firm specializing in the construction industry. FMI has offices located in Raleigh, N.C.; Tampa, Florida; and Denver.