

Thursday 26 January 2012

## UV radiation at extreme levels despite cooler, cloudy holiday weather

Some parts of New Zealand may have experienced a cooler, cloudier start to the traditional summer holiday period, but ultraviolet (UV) radiation is still at extreme levels for long periods of the day in most places.

Dr Richard McKenzie, Principal Scientist Radiation with the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), says UV will continue to reach extreme levels for most of the country over the midday period until the end of February.

“We’re talking about UV levels greater than 10. The World Health Organization recommends people need to use sun protection when levels are 3 and above. UV levels above 3 are being measured for many hours each day throughout the country and this will persist beyond the end of February, so sun protection is extremely important.”

Dr McKenzie encourages people to use the new Sun Protection Alert that tells them when they need to protect their skin from the sun, with specific reference to where in the country they live.

“They may be surprised at just how much of the day the Sun Protection Alert recommends they take sun protection measures - more than eight hours over much of the country at the moment.”

The Sun Protection Alert has been developed in association with the MetService and NIWA and is available on the websites of MetService [www.metservice.co.nz](http://www.metservice.co.nz) and SunSmart [www.sunsmart.org.nz](http://www.sunsmart.org.nz), and in most daily newspapers.

Forecast UV values are at <http://www.niwa.co.nz/our-services/online-services/uv-and-ozone/forecasts>.

SunSmart Manager Laurianne Reinsborough says UV is strongest in New Zealand during the summer holiday period, when people tend to be outside more than usual.

“Because the Sun Protection Alert conveys simple information that’s specific to each area of the country for that day, it’s easy for people to act on. Sun safety messages such as ‘seek shade’ and ‘reapply sunscreen’ are incorporated and changed regularly to reflect changes in weather forecasts.”

Ms Reinsborough says it’s not the sun’s heat that burns, but UV, so people can still get sunburnt even on cool or cloudy days.

“Sunburn is a big concern because it is linked to melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer. Unfortunately, our Kiwi lifestyle and fierce sun have given us the highest rate of melanoma in the world.”

But she says it’s easy to enjoy summer outdoors and protect our skin from UV.

“During the daylight saving months, especially between 10am and 4pm, remember to ‘slip, slop, slap and wrap’ - slip on a shirt or into the shade, slop on plenty of broad-spectrum SPF30+ sunscreen, slap on a hat and wrap on a pair of wrap-around sunglasses.”

**For more information:**

For further information on sun protection and skin cancer go to the SunSmart website [www.sunsmart.org.nz](http://www.sunsmart.org.nz) or the Cancer Society of New Zealand website [www.cancernz.org.nz](http://www.cancernz.org.nz).

**Or contact:**

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