

WORKING SAFELY WITH ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT

HAZARDS OF UV LIGHT

- Some UV wavelengths can cause burns to the outer layer of the eye. Symptoms of these burns (photokeratitis) include tearing, pain, swollen eyelids, hazy vision, light sensitivity, and a gritty feeling in the eyes. Symptoms delayed 6–12 hours, may last up to 48 hours, and are rarely permanent.
- UV light can cause or exacerbate skin burns (like sunburn).
- Long-term exposure to UV-B is associated with skin cancer.
- See table below for hazards associated with different UV wavelengths.



Type of UV	Wavelength, nm	In sunlight?	Hazards
UV-A	315–400	Yes	Causes tanning and wrinkling, exacerbates sunburn.
UV-B	280–315	Yes	Causes sunburn and increases cancer risk. Can burn skin and eyes.
UV-C	100–280	Yes, but attenuated by ozone	Artificial sources can burn skin and eyes. Wavelengths <180 nm are absorbed by air.



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SAFE WORK PRACTICES

- Use UV shielding when possible (some shields are transparent).
- Turn off germicidal UV lights when working in the illuminated area.
- Wear UV protective safety glasses for any work with UV light.
- Cover skin. This is more important with shorter wavelengths, longer exposure times, and fairer skin.
- Call OESO at 684-5996 with questions.