SURVEY SAFETY TIP

Cancers Induced by Sun Exposure

As a surveyor, you are exposed to a risk of developing skin or eye cancers. These cancers are caused by the UV rays of the sun, which do damage to the melanocytes (pigment cells) of the skin or the epithelial (pigment) cells of the cornea. UV rays cause damage to the DNA of your skin or eyes. This can cause a runaway mutation of your skin or corneal cells, which causes cancer. The most dangerous skin cancer is melanoma. Skin cancer can cause death if not treated early. The only known cure to date for skin cancer is surgical removal before it reaches a depth of 1mm. Early removal is 100% effective. However, if you do not treat it early, and skin cancer reaches the bottom of your dermal (lower skin) layer, it begins to travel through your lymph system. You then have less than 10% chance of survival during the next 5 years. The key to your survival, then, is to be able to recognize it early.

RECOGNITION

A good mnemonic device for intercepting the onset of skin or eye cancers is ‘ABCDEE’:

- Asymmetrical skin lesion
- Border of the lesion is irregular.
- Color: Melanomas usually have multiple colors.
- Diameter: Moles >5mm are more likely to be melanomas than smaller moles.
- Evolution: If a mole begins evolving, it is an indicator that it is malignant.
- Elevation: The mole becomes elevated.

If you see any or especially several of these conditions on some part of the skin or eye, see your physician immediately!
PREVENTION

- Apply sunscreen with the highest SPF rating possible every day on all sun-exposed parts of the skin. Sunscreen is available through the Survey Division.
- Wear sunglasses with UV protection.
- Apply lip balm with UV protection.
- Avoid getting sun tanned or sunburned.
- Avoid excessive sun exposure.
- Wear protective clothing (e.g. brimmed hat, long sleeved shirt, long pants, wrap around the neck, gloves).
- Examine all surfaces of your body periodically, including your corneas. Remember that melanoma can develop on surfaces that are not exposed to the sun (e.g. between your toes, under your nails).
- Have your partner or physician periodically examine body surfaces you can’t see in a mirror (Don’t forget your scalp).
- Early forms of melanoma look rather “innocent.” If you suspect you have melanoma, keep a log of a suspected region, noting size, shape, and coloration.