

OMNITRACS ROAD AHEAD BLOG SERIES

“ 3 THINGS TRUCKERS SHOULD KEEP IN MIND ABOUT SKIN HEALTH”



In 2012, the New England Journal of Medicine **released a popular image** that portrayed what frequent sun exposure does to a person’s face. The man in the image, Bill McElligott, was a trucker who had spent 28 years on the road and accumulated excess exposure to ultraviolet A (UVA) radiation. He developed a condition known as unilateral dermatoheliosis, which equated to the thickening of his skin over a period of 25 years.

While the image has been frequently used to raise awareness on skin health in many circles, it remains particularly relevant to the trucking community. Truckers spend many days on the road, and recent studies have **brought to light** how susceptible the everyday driver is to skin cancer. If everyday drivers are at risk from limited morning commutes, what does that pose for truck drivers whose livelihoods revolve around driving?

#1: Not all sides of your body are treated equally

Recent research has found that while front windshields block an average of 96% of UV rays, side windows block as little as 44% of these rays. Since UVA light is able to penetrate through glass, and Americans drive on the right side of the road, our left sides are more at risk of developing skin cancer.

In fact, UV exposure is **found** to be 5 times greater in the left arm and 20 times greater on the left side of the face for U.S. drivers. This frequent sun exposure can result in much damage, including wrinkles, sagging, skin leathering, and brown spots. In one study, almost 75% of **melanoma** — a form of cancer that develops from the cells that give skin a tan or brown color — was diagnosed on the left side.

#2: With SPF, double the number does not always mean double the protection

Many may naturally believe that the highest SPF, or sun protection factor, offers the highest level of protection from the sun. In reality, the highest SPFs only offer slightly better protection from the sun than a sunscreen with SPF 50, and the Environmental Working Group (EWG) **found** that those who navigate toward the highest number may obtain a false sense of security

and spend unnecessary, excess, and unprotected time in the sun. To put this into further context, they found that SPF 100 was nowhere near twice as protective as SPF 50.

Dr. David Andrews, a senior scientist at EWG, advises that you should stick with SPF 15-50, apply a liberal coating, and reapply every two hours you're out in the sun. Truckers should also reapply SPF when making strenuous dock or unloading stops, as the EWG recommends also reapplying after instances of excessive sweating.

#3: Apply sunscreen every day — even when the sun isn't visible

It's understandable that when the sun is out of sight it's out of mind, but is it really out of sight during the day? The short answer is no.

Although it may be cloudy, clouds are not magical, supernatural-like forces blocking the sun's rays. As a matter of fact, **clouds filter less than 25%** of the UV rays that penetrate your skin and cause skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the **most common cancer** in the U.S., and it is estimated that it will affect 1 in 5 Americans. Gain more in-depth knowledge of skin health, skin cancer, and the many ways you can protect yourself on and off the road by **checking out** the Skin Cancer Foundation website.