



Posted on [January 10, 2012](#)

[← Previous](#) [Next →](#)

## Winter Means Wearing Sunglasses

**Your eyes need protection from the sun's intense ultraviolet rays.**

You may feel less heat from that winter sun — but don't be fooled. Those trendy sunglasses you bought last summer are just as important now. The sun's rays can still do serious damage to your eyes, whether you live in snowy Chicago or sunny L.A.

"People don't realize that just because the sun isn't as intense or as hot, they need protection," says Susan Taub, MD, assistant professor of ophthalmology at Northwestern University School of Medicine in Chicago.

The winter sun sits lower in the sky — and at a different angle — than during warmer seasons, she says. "That actually gives you more exposure if you're out for a longer period of time, like at sports and other events," she tells. "It can be damaging to various layers of the eye."

Research shows that the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can contribute to various eye diseases related to aging, like cataracts and macular degeneration.

Anyone who spends long hours outdoors, take note. "In reality, people need sunglasses all year long," Taub says. "Anyone who has driven when there's snow on the ground knows that. Even when there isn't snow, you're still at risk because of the glare coming off the cement."

Because snow is reflective, up to 85% of the sun's UV rays are reflected upward, according to the Vision Council of America. Also, the reflective qualities of snow make it difficult for skiers to see the slope as they descend, possibly causing injuries.

In the short term, those UV rays can cause sunburned eyes. In snow country, they call it snow blindness — and it's a big problem for skiers and snowmobilers. Without eye protection, snow blindness can damage the cornea for up to a week. "The surface of the eyes are actually sunburned," Taub says. "It's usually very painful but heals within a week."

Certain drugs also can make eyes and skin more sensitive to the sun's rays — birth-control pills, sulfa antibiotics, diuretics, and tranquilizers. "You get sunburned in one-third or one-tenth of the time than usual," she tells.

It's happened to Taub: On one vacation, an hour in the sun left her with a big red welt, despite the sunblock she was wearing. The antibiotic she had been taking, the pharmacist later confirmed, was a photosensitizing drug.

Children are especially susceptible to UV-related eye problems, since they spend more time outdoors. "Sun protection for the eyes is important at every age," Taub says. She recommends that children and teens have an eye exam every six months.

Adults should have an eye exam at least every other year, or see an ophthalmologist or optometrist sooner if any symptoms appear.

Wear protective eyewear with anti-reflective, polarized lenses that block out 100% of UV radiation, she advises. The UV code will indicate if sunglasses are protective. An ophthalmologist or optometrist also can measure UV protection using an instrument called a spectrometer, Taub says.

This entry was posted in [Uncategorized](#) and tagged [Northwestern University School of Medicine](#), [ophthalmologist](#), [optometrist](#), [protection](#), [sun](#), [Sun protection](#), [Susan Taub](#), [time](#), [ultraviolet rays](#), [UV rays](#) by [admin](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

## Safety & Accident

# Fleet Safety Tip of the Week

January 18, 2012

SHARING TOOLS | [Print](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Email](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [+](#) | [0](#)

The month of January often sees an increase in the number of traffic accidents resulting from motorists being temporarily blinded by the sun, mainly because of the glare from highly reflective snow and ice.

Vision Council of America (VCA) offers the following tips for motorists to help reduce the dangers caused by winter glare:

- Drive cautiously and leave a proper distance to ensure ample reaction time.
- Make it a habit to lower visors to help block some of the reflected light.
- Avoid using high-gloss vinyl cleansers on dashboards.
- Keep the car windshield clean and the windshield washer fluid reservoir full.
- When possible, take an alternate route lined with trees or tall buildings in lieu of one with extreme glare.
- Turn on headlights to reduce the possible poor visibility of oncoming drivers.
- Most importantly, wear sunglasses at all times. Even more important is to wear sunglasses with polarized lenses to reduce glare, and lenses with UV protection to shield the eyes from damage.

Using 100-percent polarized lenses is the only truly effective way of eliminating glare. Polarized and antireflective lenses are particularly good for protecting the eyes from sun glare in the winter, but are also extremely beneficial year-round. Polarized lenses utilize polarized filtering technology to deflect and diffuse concentrated light waves. The filtering process eliminates 99-percent of the reflected glare.

Tags: [driver safety tips](#), [driving safety](#)



**fleet risk**  
**Management**

*An online service for fleets that extracts key predictors of risk, identifies at-risk drivers and executes remedial training.*

877-234-0378

[drivercare@ceinetwork.com](mailto:drivercare@ceinetwork.com)

### Popular Stories

**News**

**Article**

- » [GM to Upgrade Volt to Protect Battery and Related Coolant System](#)
- » [BMW Recalling Over 88,900 Mini Cars](#)
- » [NHTSA Closes Chevrolet Volt Investigation](#)
- » [Fleet Safety Tip of the Week](#)
- » [Fleet Safety Tip of the Week](#)

### Popular Tags »

AAA CARB Chrysler driver training Enterprise Rent-A-Car Farmers Insurance fuel cards fuel economy GEICO **General Motors Corp.** Hertz J.D. Power liability Networkfleet New York Rhode Island State Farm SUV TRALA vicarious liability



## { In The News }

### Report: Many U.S. cities (including Norfolk, VA) have “extreme” UV levels

A report by The Vision Council (Alexandria, Va.) found that without protective measures, residents of some U.S. cities are at “very high or extreme risk” for ocular or skin damage as a result of Ultraviolet (UV) radiation at least one day out of every four, the council said. The report, “Hidden Dangers of UV: Keeping Your Eyes Safe,” details the factors that can increase exposure risks, discusses forecasts that reveal the intensity of solar UV in cities across the country, and offers tips for preventing UV-related vision problems. The report notes that of the 58 cities indexed by UV level by the National Weather Service, many have “very high or extreme” UV radiation levels “more than 20% of the year.” The report cites certain “surprise” UV-intensive cities, such as Wichita, Kan.; Boise, Idaho; and Norfolk, Va.

The report also offers tips for choosing an effective pair of sunglasses, including buying from reputable retailers, understanding lens color, selecting a design for maximum coverage, and more. To read the report, visit [www.thevisioncouncil.org/sunglasses](http://www.thevisioncouncil.org/sunglasses).

[Click here to read the article that originally appeared on ASCRS EyeWorld Weekly News.](#)