

Press Release

UV Radiation from Sunbeds and Similar Services Frequently Too High in the European Tanning Salons

PROSAFE Releases App to Help Consumers Tan Responsibly

In more than half of the sunbeds in tanning salons and similar facilities in Europe, the UV radiation emitted exceeds the legal limit of 0,3 W/m². This can be concluded from the results of a Joint Action by market surveillance authorities from twelve European countries. The action also found that many tanning facilities fail to provide sufficient information on the risks of tanning and that individual guidance and tanning advice is frequently not given.

A campaign to inform consumers about the risks of artificial tanning was launched as part of the Joint Action. Within this framework, PROSAFE releases the free app Tan-R for I-phone and Android platforms to stimulate and help consumers tan more responsibly.

Joint Action on Sunbeds 2010-2011

Over the period 2010-2011 market surveillance authorities from twelve European countries participated in a cross border Joint Action to enforce the safety requirements for sunbeds and sunbed services. During the action, tanning salons and similar facilities were inspected, as well as the sunbeds offered there for use to the general public. The Joint Action on Sunbeds was partially funded by the European Union through the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers.

Requirements for Tanning Salons

The European safety requirements for sunbeds are based on the Low Voltage Directive and for sunbed services on the General Product Safety Directive. Tanning salons should provide the consumer with information and advice about the tanning schemes suitable for their skin type, forbid the use of sunbeds by consumers under the age of 18 and give clear information about the hazards of UV radiation. The Sunbeds in operation must carry warnings. The UV radiation emitted by the sunbed is restricted to 0,3W/m².

Joint Action Results

The market surveillance authorities participating in this cross border action carried out 1307 inspections at more than 1178 locations and investigated more than 1798 sunbeds. The great majority of these inspections took place at service providers (tanning salons, wellness centres, etc) and concentrated on the safety information and advice provided to consumers, the way the 18 year age limit was handled, the labelling of the sunbeds, the availability of eye protection and the UV - radiation emitted by the sunbeds.

The percentage of artificial tanning service operators that did not provide sufficient information varied between 10% and 100% in the participating Member States. Similar percentages of tanning services providers failed to provide suitable customer guidance, taking into account the individual skin condition of their customer. In most facilities the minimum age of 18 years was not or insufficiently enforced.



During the action, 1798 sunbeds were inspected for compliance with the labelling requirements. A substantial percentage of the sunbeds did not comply. For example, in some of the participating countries, up to 20% or even 45% of the tanning parlours were not mentioning the obligatory warning that UV radiation may cause injury.

The risks of artificial tanning are not only determined by the way consumers use the sun beds, but also by the amount of UV radiation emitted from the UV-tubes. This radiation, measured as Erythemally weighted irradiation (EWI), should not exceed 0,3 W/m². During the Joint Action, the EWI values of a total of 1072 sunbeds were measured. The results showed that 688 (64%) sunbeds had exceeded sometimes considerably the EWI limit of 0,3 W/m².

The overall conclusions from the results of the inspections in the Joint Action on sunbeds are that:

- Consumer guidance in tanning studios is not provided regularly and it is often not verifiable;
- In many tanning services the 18 year age limit is not respected;
- The labelling of the sunbeds fails to comply in at least 20% of the cases;
- The maximum EWI values for sunbeds are violated in approximately half of the sunbeds offered in tanning services.

Consumer information campaign

As part of the Joint Action, PROSAFE releases a free mobile phone application (app) for the iPhone and Android platforms intended to inform users of the risks associated with tanning and to give advice about the responsible use of sunbeds.

The application, Tan-R, offers smart-phone users a set of questions about their physical condition. Based on the answers Tan-R determines instructions and advice about the use of artificial tanning devices. Tan-R primarily seeks out if the user is in appropriate condition to make use of sunbeds and sunbed services. This makes Tan-R an important pre-test beforehand the use of a sunbed or solarium device. Nevertheless, when Tan-R doesn't detect a predominant objection, consumers should still seek personal advice about their tanning session in the sunbed studio before commencing their tanning session.

Besides the free Tan R application, PROSAFE has opened a web site providing additional information on artificial tanning. Please follow the link for further information: www.mobiletanningdevice.com.

Contact Person: Marijn Colijn
Function: Project Leader Joint Action Sunbeds II
Contact details:
Marijn.Colijn@prosafe.org
0031 (0)6 15035842

Disclaimer

"This press release arises from the Joint Market Surveillance Actions on Sunbeds II, which have received funding from the European Union in the framework of the 'Programme of Community action in the field of Consumer policy (2007-2013)'.

The publication reflects only the views of the author, and the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.