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## Protecting your Skin and Belongings: UV Defense Through Window Film

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By Kathryn Giblin, Vice President Global Marketing, Bekaert Specialty  
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(HealthNewsDigest.com) - Dermatologists all agree: prolonged exposure to damaging UVA and UVB rays is dangerous. While up to 10 minutes of sunshine a day is effective in recharging the body's source of Vitamin D (which helps our body's absorb calcium and therefore keeps our bones strong), unprotected exposure for longer lengths of time can cause premature aging, skin damage, eye damage, immune system suppression and even cancer.

Most of us are familiar with sunscreens – lotions that carry skin protection factor (SPF) ratings which vary in strength, from as little as 4 all the way to 70. But what if you could apply a layer of solar protection just once, yet reap the benefits day in and day out for years? What if this layer of protection provided an SPF rating of 285?

With window film, it is possible to achieve this level of protection. Installing solar control window film, such as Solar Gard®, on glass windows and doors in automobiles, homes and places of business gives you protection against damaging UV rays. In addition, window film improves the overall safety of your building, improves comfort and satisfaction and makes your building more energy efficient.

This article will educate you on how glass works and the host of benefits that window film offers, with particular attention to how solar control window film blocks UVA and UVB rays. We have also provided a checklist for determining whether window film installation is right for your facility.

The Basics: Solar Energy and Glass

Understanding how glass works and the process of heat transfer through glass will help you



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understand how the benefits of window film are achieved. There are three types of heat transfer: radiation, conduction and convection. Solar energy (also called solar radiation) comes in through a window and is converted to heat when it strikes people or objects. In offices, these UV rays cause uncomfortable heat pockets that are often “solved” by turning on (or up) air conditioning units, even in cool climates. Infiltration of these UV rays also puts employees at risk for skin cancer and can cause extreme glare, fading of furniture, artwork, carpets, etc.

Through an untreated window, solar energy can take one of three paths: it can be transmitted, absorbed or reflected. Some energy is transmitted through glass, some is absorbed into the window, and some light is reflected back to its original source. Before installing window film, speak to a qualified expert who will guide you to the appropriate film for your windows; the wrong type of window film applied to certain low-e windows, can force the glass to absorb too much solar energy, causing the window to crack. Avoiding do-it-yourself products and using the right adhesives – those with high optical clarity- will mitigate this risk.

The best way to manage the transfer of solar energy is to keep it from turning into heat in the first place. Solar Gard® window film interrupts the transfer of energy by rejecting a significant amount of energy back outside the window.

#### Generalized Benefits of Window Film

Window film is unique in that it is a cost-effective and accommodating product that offers a wide range of benefits for building owners and occupants:

**UV protection:** the risk of skin cancer and fading, an especially critical component of retail and hospitality environments - where investments in merchandise, furniture, carpeting, etc. are substantial - is mitigated when a spectrally-selective window film is installed to protect both skin and furnishings.

**Safety & security:** window film keeps shattered glass in place. This is critical for buildings whose safety can not be compromised from burglary, terrorist attacks or extreme weather. **Improved energy savings:** window film helps keep HVAC systems at optimum levels and enhances the comfort inside a building by rejecting heat so the interior temperature is more consistent and comfortable.

**Glare reduction:** computer screens as well as LCD and plasma display screens are prone to serious glare issues, so building occupants are forced to move or close blinds or drapes to block the light, which increases dependency on artificial lighting. Window film eliminates glare and allows building occupants take advantage of the day's natural light.

**No-hassle installation:** whether used to retrofit and rehab older buildings, or included in the specifications of new construction, window film is a flexible option for application to glass windows and doors. Window film is typically applied on the interior side of the glass, but new technology makes outside weatherable films available as well. Finally, window film can be applied during off hours, so as not to disturb your workforce.

#### Choosing the Right Film

Window film is a highly technical product, and reflects an industry where technology has made great advancements. It is perhaps one of the most diverse products on the market for building owners. Because there are literally hundreds of variations of window film, facility managers should meet with a professional window film installer to discuss their priorities and select a film that suits their exact needs.

Today, there are a range of solar control films which are virtually undetectable from the inside and outside and offer exceptional UV-blocking properties. Protecting your furnishings, employees, products and merchandise from damaging UV rays is neither complicated nor prohibitively expensive. Payback of window film is high; in many cases, window film pays for itself well within its warranty period, offering building managers a high return on investment.

Professionally installed window film is the best solution for blocking 99% of harmful UV light.

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