



# Weekly Safety Meeting

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## Eye Wash Safety

We all hope we never need an eyewash station, but if an accident should happen it's our wish that the station is clean and accessible. If a foreign particle enters an eye, an emergency eyewash station is the most important initial step in first-aid treatment.

Chemical burns to the eye are among the most urgent of emergencies. Toxic substances, when coming in contact with the eye, immediately begin to damage sensitive eye tissue. The longer they remain in contact, the greater the damage to the eye. Besides tissue damage, acids and alkali can change the pH in the eye itself. When the pH of the eye begins to get out of the narrow tolerable range, severe eye damage, including blindness, may result. Therefore, it is imperative to begin flushing as quickly as possible after the eye comes in contact with a harmful substance.

When irritating or corrosive foreign substances get into the eye, the eyelids involuntarily clamp shut. Therefore, the person requiring the use of an eyewash device frequently needs assistance to find his/her way to the device.

Eyewash stations must meet the requirements of ANSI Z358.1.

### Eyewash REQUIRED If:

- The Safety Data Sheet (SDS) indicates a chemical in use is caustic, toxic, or corrosive;
- The SDS states that serious eye damage may result; or
- A warning such as "causes chemical burns" or "causes permanent eye damage" is posted on container labels.

### Eyewash Must Have the Following:

- Pure clean water;
- Hands free operation;
- Constant water flow rate for a full 15 minutes;
- Highly visible markings and signs;
- Unobstructed access; and
  - The single most important treatment for chemically burned eyes is copious irrigation within seconds of injury. This means that victims should not have to climb over or around obstacles to find the eyewash station. Make sure there are no barriers to the unit.

- Clean, Functional Equipment;
  - Portable eyewash units are an option in areas where plumbed water is not accessible or of high enough quality. Portable units also need an anti-bacterial additive to ensure proper water sanitation. Flushing with any water is better than none, but purified water reduces potential for secondary eye infections.

## The First 10 Seconds are Critical:

The ANSI standard states that it is the installer's responsibility to ensure that eyewash stations are placed in accessible locations that require no more than 10 seconds to reach from the hazard. This means that eyewash units must be placed on the same level as the hazard with a path of travel free of obstructions such as pallets, ladders, boxes, etc. that could inhibit the use of the equipment within the required 10 second limit. ANSI guidelines suggest a full 15 minutes of flushing before seeking further medical help.

As noted earlier, the person requiring the use of an eyewash device frequently needs assistance to find his/her way to the device. This is best accomplished by two people, each taking an arm of the injured person and quickly leading him/her to the nearest eyewash device.

Immediately after the accident, flood the eye with water or eyewash solution, using fingers to keep the eye open as wide as possible. Water may be colder than body temperature, which can be uncomfortable; but it is imperative to irrigate for the recommended period, at least 15 minutes.

The helpers activate the eyewash device and position the water stream so that the injured person can flush the eye from the inside corner to the outside corner. It is important to remember this so that the harmful substance is not flushed into the other eye. Since eyelids involuntarily clamp shut when irritated, the victim can use his/her hands to hold open the eyelids to allow emergency eye flushing. Roll the eyeball as much as possible to remove any loose particles retained under the eyelids. Do not put anything except water into the eyes to remove particles.

The eyes should be irrigated continually during transport to a medical facility. The best way to accomplish this may be to have a portable eyewash system ready that can be carried along.

***MAKE SURE YOUR EYEWASH STATION IS EMERGENCY READY!!***

