



Weekly Safety Meeting

Eye Wash Safety

We all hope we never need an eyewash station, but if an accident should happen, we want the station to be clean and accessible. If a foreign particle enters the 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.

When a toxic substance comes in contact with the eye, they 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 or her way to the device/station.

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 says that serious eye damage may result; or
- Warnings such as “causes chemical burns” or “causes permanent eye damage” are posted on container labels.

Eyewash Stations 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;
- Accessibility;
- The single most important treatment for chemically-burned eyes is copious irrigation within second of the injury. This means that the victims should not have to climb over or around obstacles to find the eyewash station. Make sure there are no barriers to the eyewash station.

Clean, Functional Equipment; and

Portable eyewash units are an option in areas where plumbed in 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:

An 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 his/her way to the eyewash device. This process is best accomplished by two people, each taking an arm of the injured person and quickly leading him or her to the nearest eyewash device.

The helpers then 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. As mentioned before, since eyelids involuntarily clamp shut when irritated, the victim can use his or her hand to hold open the eyelid to allow emergency eye flushing.

Proper Use:

Employees who are exposed to possible chemical splashes must know in advance how to use an eyewash/deluge station properly:

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 of time;

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; and

The eyes should be irrigated for at least 15 minutes and the victim transported to a medical facility immediately. Continue irrigation of eyes during transport. The best way to accomplish this may be to have a portable eyewash system ready that can be carried along with the injured employee.

KNOW HOW TO FIND THE EYEWASH STATION!

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Supervisor:	Subject:
Location:	Date:
Conducted By:	Trainer Signature:

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