



## SAFETY TOOLBOX TRAINING – EMERGENCY EYEWASH EQUIPMENT

### SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:

- Use toolbox trainings to spark safety discussions during monthly meetings with employees
- Submit the employee sign-in sheet to your designated administrative assistant /training coordinator as a record of training

Emergency eyewash stations provide on-the-spot decontamination by allowing you to flush away hazardous substances that can cause injury. Hopefully, you never need to use emergency eyewash equipment. However, you want to make sure emergency eyewash stations are both clean and accessible in case you find yourself needing one. If you get foreign particles or chemicals in your eyes, an emergency eyewash station is the most important initial step in first-aid treatment. Delaying treatment, even for a few seconds, may cause serious injury.

### Location

Eyewash stations are needed if you handle corrosive materials. Review your Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) and chemical labels. If you see warnings such as “causes chemical burns” or “causes permanent eye damage” you need an eyewash station in your area. In general, eyewash units must:

- Have highly visible markings and signs;
- Be on the same floor as the hazard. An injured worker should not have to use stairs to travel between the workstation and the emergency equipment;
- Not come into contact with any electrical equipment that may become a hazard when wet; and
- Be protected from freezing when installed outdoors;
- Have pure clean water;
- Have hands free operation;
- Maintain a constant water flow rate for a full 15 minutes; and
- Have unobstructed access. Workers should not have to pass through doorways or weave through machinery or other obstacles to reach eyewash units.



### Accessibility

To be effective, the equipment has to be accessible. The single most important treatment for chemically-burned eyes is copious irrigation within *seconds* of injury. This means injured workers should not have to climb over or around obstacles to find the eyewash station. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) recommends that a person be able to reach the equipment in no more than 10 seconds. In practical terms, consider that the person who needs the equipment will be injured and may not have use of their vision.



**Make sure there are no barriers blocking the unit!**

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### *Maintenance Requirement*

If eyewash equipment is located in your shop, mechanical room, or custodial closet, it must be inspected to ensure it functions properly with adequate water flow and is clean and sanitary. The following should be performed:

- The person conducting the inspection must date and initial that the inspection was performed. Please feel free to use the Eyewash Inspection Form located on our website at [www.ehso.emory.edu](http://www.ehso.emory.edu);
- Plumbed units must be activated monthly to verify operation;
  - Allow the water to run for 2-3 minutes to ensure adequate flushing of the equipment;
  - Place the protective caps back on the eyewash outlets to prevent dust and debris from collecting;
- Portable eyewash units are an option in areas where plumbed water is not accessible. These units also need an anti-bacterial additive to ensure proper water sanitation. The manufacturer's change-out schedule must be followed. Also, the unit should be activated in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.



### *Training in Proper Use*

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



- 1) Immediately after the accident, flood the eye with water, using your 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 *at least 15 minutes*;
- 2) If you wear contact lenses, remove the lenses as soon as possible to ensure the chemical is not trapped behind the lenses. Continue to flush the eyes to ensure the chemical has been rinsed away; and
- 3) Seek medical attention after irrigating for the required time.

It's easy to forget about eyewash stations until they are needed in an emergency, but this is not the time you want to find out that yours is covered with dust or not working at all. Test your eyewash equipment monthly and learn how to use it. It could possibly save your sight!

**REMEMBER: HINDSIGHT EXPLAINS THE INJURY THAT FORESIGHT WOULD HAVE PREVENTED**

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### COMMON QUESTIONS:

1. What water temperature is required?

**Answer:** The ANSI standard recommends that the water should be “tepid”. The ANSI 358.1-2004 appendix defines tepid water as water temperature between 60° F – 100° F.

- In locations where freezing temperatures exist, frost-proof or freeze protected equipment must be installed.
- In locations where temperatures reach scalding levels from heat or exposure to direct sunlight, scald protection valves must be installed.

2. What are examples of areas that may require eyewash stations?

**Answer:** Work areas and operations that may require these devices include:

- Battery charging areas
- Laboratories
- Spraying operations
- High dust areas
- Hazardous substances dispensing stations

3. Do I really need to test (activate) plumbed eyewashes monthly?

**Answer:** Yes, testing of plumbed units is required to ensure a flushing fluid supply is available when needed. Flushing helps clear the supply line of any sediment buildup and minimizes microbial contamination due to sitting water.

4. How often do I need to clean and maintain my portable self-contained eyewash?

**Answer:** Portable eyewashes that mix potable water and preservative should be cleaned and refilled per the manufacturer's instructions, which typically is every four to six months.

5. Does bottle eyewash meet the requirements of ANSI for flushing?

**Answer:** Bottle eyewash is classified by ANSI as personal and does not meet the main criteria of plumbed or self-contained eyewash equipment.