

Using Eyewashes and Emergency Showers

Eyewashes and emergency showers:

- Are used to flush contaminants from your eyes, face or body
- Are a form of first aid equipment to be used in the event of an accident
- Are NOT a substitute for safety precautions and good work practices
- May reduce damage caused by chemicals by immediately flushing
- Must be located close to areas where exposures might occur
- Must function flawlessly, without delay
- Are not used frequently and may become neglected

Safely Using Eyewashes and Emergency Showers

The following are some best practices for eyewashes and emergency showers:

- Get trained
- Help others
- Flush for the appropriate amount of time
 - For most exposures, the recommended flushing time is 15 minutes or longer
 - Check the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for specific first aid recommendations for each material
- Remove clothing and PPE to flush properly, as needed. If a harmful chemical has been absorbed into your clothing or PPE, begin showering and then remove your clothing/PPE
- Hold eyes open while washing eyes
- Remove contact lenses as soon as possible
- Be aware that wetting dry powders may make chemicals more hazardous

REMEMBER to:

- Refer to manufacturer instructions for your specific eyewashes and emergency showers
- Read the Safety Data Sheet for each material
- Seek qualified medical attention immediately after eyewash or emergency shower use

Recognizing Eyewash and Emergency Neglect

Signs of neglect include:

- Obstructions in the area
- Clogged, broken or missing nozzles
- Inoperable activating valves
- Improper water pressure – too high or low
- Foreign particles in bowls or basins
- Missing nozzle dustcovers
- Low fluid levels in self-contained eyewashes
- Visible debris/discoloration in cleansing solutions

Report issues and ensure that unsafe items are properly corrected.

Correcting Common Eyewash and Emergency Shower Problems

Make them visible and unobstructed by:

- Placing within 10 seconds of the hazard
- Placing them on the same level as the hazard
- Posting signs prominently
- Applying floor markings
- Removing obstructions, as necessary

Maintain them by:

- Keeping nozzles clean (dustcovers help)
- Keeping water clean
- Checking water flow rates (streams meet in the middle of an eyewash, but don't overshoot the bowl; streams should displace nozzle caps if present)
- Ensuring tepid water is used
- Documenting your inspection
 - Typically, test plumbed, fixed units weekly
 - In-depth inspections for code compliance are needed less frequently (e.g., annually)
 - Look for tags/decals before inspecting and update them after