

Emergency Showers & Eyewash Stations

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulation (29 CFR 1910.151(c)) requires that suitable means for flushing and quick drenching of the eyes and body be available in any area where toxic and/or corrosive materials are in use. In cases of an exposure, the initial first aid treatment is to flush affected area with water for a **minimum** of 15 minutes.



The first 10 to 15 seconds after exposure to a hazardous substance, especially a corrosive substance, are critical. The area around a safety shower/eyewash station should be kept clear of obstructions. Delaying treatment, even for a few seconds, may cause serious injury.

FIRST AID FOR EYE/FACE INJURIES

- Hold eyelids open using the thumb and index finger to help ensure that effective rinsing has occurred behind the eyelid.
- It is normal to close eyes tightly when splashed, but this will prevent water or eye solution from rinsing and washing the chemical out. Eyelids must be held open. Practice this procedure to help familiarize you with the feel of rinsing.
- Water or eye solution should NOT be directly aimed onto the eyeball, but aimed at the base of the nose. Portable squeeze bottles are not acceptable as eyewash units, they may assist but do not replace.
- Flush eyes and eyelids with water or eye solution for a **minimum** of 15 minutes. "Roll" eyes around to ensure full rinsing. An injured person may need help holding the eyelids open.
- Contact lenses must be removed as soon as possible to ensure that chemicals are not trapped behind the lenses and then the eyes can be completely rinsed of the harmful chemical(s).
- Medical attention should be sought **immediately!**

FIRST AID FOR BODILY INJURIES

- Immediately flush the affected area with copious quantities of water for **at least** 15 minutes. Protect the eyes from inadvertent contamination.
- Remove contaminated clothing, jewelry, and shoes. Chemicals will stay on the body longer if clothing is not removed. **Do Not** let modesty slow you down. Every second counts.
- Seek medical attention immediately after the 15 minute shower.

CONTACT LENSES

In general, contact lenses can be worn in most workplace environments when used with appropriate protective eyewear devices that conform to the Z87.1 standard. However, if the work environment entails regular exposures to chemicals, vapors, splashes, radiant or intense heat, molten metals, or highly particulate atmospheres, contact lens use should be restricted accordingly. Decisions about contact lens use should be made on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the guidelines of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Other federal or state regulations may also limit their use.

If wearing contact lenses is allowed, a specific written management policy on contact lens use should be developed with employee consultation and involvement. The policy should include the following:

Protective eyewear meeting or exceeding ANSI Z87.1 must be worn at all times by individuals in designated areas.

Employees and visitors should be advised of defined areas where contacts are not allowed.

At work stations where contacts are allowed, the type of eye protection required should be specified.

Restrictions on contact lens wear do not apply to usual office or secretarial employees.

Advise medical and first-aid personnel to follow normal eye injury first-aid procedures.

Attempts to remove contact lenses can delay proper treatment (e.g., chemical splash requires *immediate* flushing of the eyes) or may result in further injury.

Employees should be required to keep a spare pair of contact lenses and a pair of up-to-date prescription safety glasses (meeting Z87.1 standard) in their possession. This will allow employees to perform their job functions, should they desire wearing contact lenses.

For more information and/or suggestions contact the Environmental Safety Compliance Officer (ESCO) at Ext. 8441 or Email umces-safety@umces.edu

