Concrete Work – PPE Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Working with concrete is tough and requires more than just skill. You need to protect yourself from harsh chemicals, dust, and heavy materials. Without the right personal protective equipment, workers risk serious injuries such as chemical burns, lung damage from dust, eye injuries, and muscle strains. Wearing proper PPE keeps you safe on the job and helps prevent long-term health problems. Taking the time to gear up correctly means finishing each day healthy and ready for the next challenge.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Working with concrete without the right personal protective equipment puts you in serious danger every day. The risks don't just come from the heavy lifting or mess—chemical exposure and dust make this job hazardous in ways that aren't always obvious. Here's what can happen:

Chemical Burns – Wet concrete has highly alkaline chemicals that burn skin on contact. If you don't wash it off right away, it can cause painful burns and permanent skin damage. This is especially dangerous if you have cuts or broken skin.

Eye Injuries – Splashing wet concrete or airborne dust can irritate your eyes or cause serious injuries. Without goggles or face shields, you risk painful eye damage or infections.

Respiratory Issues – Concrete dust contains crystalline silica, a toxic substance that can lead to silicosis, a lung disease that causes scarring and breathing problems. Without proper masks or respirators, breathing this dust over time damages your lungs permanently.

Muscle Strains and Sprains

· Carrying heavy bags of concrete or working with wet, heavy mixes can put extreme stress on your back, shoulders, knees, and joints.

· Poor lifting techniques or rushing can cause painful injuries that take weeks to heal.

Slips, Trips, and Falls

- Wet concrete spills, uneven ground, and scattered tools create slipping hazards.
- Falls on a job site can cause broken bones, sprains, or head injuries.
- Poor housekeeping and clutter increase the chance of accidents.

Long-Term Health Risks

- Repeated exposure to concrete dust and chemicals can cause chronic respiratory illnesses and skin conditions.
- Ignoring PPE can lead to permanent disabilities, affecting your ability to work and quality of life.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Working safely with concrete means gearing up right and following smart habits every day. PPE is your first line of defense, but knowing how to use it and protect yourself fully is key. Here’s how to keep safe on every job:

Wear the Right PPE

- Always use alkali-resistant gloves to protect your hands from chemical burns.
- Wear long sleeves and pants made of durable, waterproof material to shield your skin.
- Use safety goggles or a full-face shield to protect your eyes from splashes and dust.
- Use a NIOSH-approved respirator or dust mask whenever you are mixing, cutting, or working near dry concrete dust.

Lift Smart: Always bend your knees and use your leg muscles instead of your back to lift. Keep the load close to your body to maintain balance and reduce strain. If the load is too heavy or awkward, don’t hesitate to ask for help or use mechanical lifting aids. For example, when lifting a 90-pound bag of cement, squat down with a straight back, grip it firmly, and stand up using your legs, not your spine.

Control Dust Exposure

- Wet down dry concrete or dust before cutting or grinding to keep dust from becoming airborne.
- Use tools equipped with dust collection systems or vacuum attachments.
- Work in well-ventilated areas whenever possible to reduce inhalation risks.

Clean Up and Rinse Immediately

If wet concrete or cement gets on your skin, it’s important to rinse it off right away with plenty of clean water. Don’t wait, because the longer it stays on your skin, the more it can cause burns and irritation. Also, remove any contaminated clothing immediately to prevent further contact.

Maintain a Clean Work Area

Maintaining a clean work area is essential for safety when working with concrete. Keeping walkways and work zones free from clutter, spills, and debris helps prevent trips and falls. Regularly cleaning up spilled concrete, dust, and tools ensures everyone can move safely and work efficiently.

Be Prepared for Emergencies

- Know where eyewash stations and first aid kits are located on site.
- Report any skin irritation, burns, or respiratory problems immediately to your supervisor.
- Stop work and get help at the first sign of injury or equipment malfunction.

FINAL WORD

Concrete work can be tough, but your safety should never be an afterthought. Remember, a few smart habits today can keep you healthy and strong for every job ahead. Stay safe, stay sharp, and finish every day ready for the next challenge.