Safety Shower Drills

Safety Talk

The time to learn how to use a safety shower or eyewash is now – not during an emergency. Make sure you know how to locate and operate these safety devices. Take advantage of drills to learn how to save yourself or a fellow worker.

Your workplace is most likely equipped with safety showers and eyewash stations and you may have used them. Not only are they used in emergency situations to wash away harmful chemicals or put out clothing fires, but safety showers can also rinse off contaminated clothing.

Flushing with water – the principle on which these systems are based – is the best immediate treatment when harmful substances come into contact with the skin or eyes.

Eyewash stations and safety showers should be located as close as possible to hazardous areas. They should be brightly colored, well-lighted and marked by a recognizable symbol. The path to these stations and showers should be clear of obstructions.

Sometimes it may be necessary to provide portable eyewashes close to the hazardous areas.

Training should be provided to every employee on how to get to the showers or eyewash stations, even in the dark. All workers should also be trained in the operation of this emergency equipment. Knowing these things makes all the difference between a minor and serious injury.

Anyone who gets something in his eyes should get to an eyewash station immediately. In general, the victim leans over two upward streams of water to flush his eyes for at least 20 minutes. This station is usually mounted on a pedestal, wall or is part of a faucet for a standard sink.

Sometimes there is a facewash connected with the eyewash, consisting of a face spray ring or multiple spray heads. Water is sprayed on the face while the eyes are being flushed.

Emergency showers are designed to run water over the entire body, but not the eyes because the water pressure could damage delicate eye tissues. The victim should get under the running water immediately and stay there for at least 20 minutes. Contaminated clothing should be taken off under the shower, not before, because every second counts in a chemical exposure emergency.

Do you know how to find the safety showers and eyewash stations in your workplace? Could you find your way there if you couldn’t see? In case of a chemical accident, you might have to do just that. Practice getting to the safety shower and eyewash station and turning them on with your eyes closed.

Care should be taken to keep showers and eyewash stations well-maintained and clean. There should be someone assigned to look after them regularly. Malfunctioning showers, eyewashes and hoses can seriously interfere with emergency treatment.

And make sure you take part in regular emergency preparedness drills.