

## Emergency Eyewash Use

Emergency eyewash equipment provides a steady stream of water or saline solution that allows workers to flush away hazardous substances that can cause an eye injury. Chemicals and substances can still find their way into your eyes even with controls, personal protective equipment, and safety precautions in place. Therefore, emergency eyewash equipment is an important piece of emergency equipment necessary to minimize injury.

### What's the Danger?

Common Mistakes When Using an Eyewash Station	
<b>Flushing Time</b>	When eyes are exposed to chemicals, they are commonly only flushed for only 5 minutes due to discomfort. This is not an adequate amount of time to clear chemicals or debris.
<b>Water Temperature and Volume</b>	When the water is too cold or hot it may cause discomfort to the user preventing adequate flush time. The volume of the water required for an adequate flush is at least 1.5 litres/minute. The water temperature must be maintained between 16-38 °C (60-100°F).
<b>Training</b>	Workers are not always trained on how to use the specific eyewash station available in their workplace. Workers are to be trained on the use of portable eyewash bottles to ensure they can safely travel to a 15-minute eyewash station and the specific eyewash station being used.
<b>Inspections</b>	Eyewash stations are not regularly inspected and cleaned. Eyewash stations are required to be inspected weekly and the water/solution is to be changed every 6 months for portable stations. Inspections correct deficiencies such as valve leakage, clogged openings and lines, cleanliness, fluid volume, and expired solutions.
<b>Location of Equipment</b>	When the location of equipment is not close to the chemical area. Eyewash equipment can be ineffective if it is more than a 10-second walking distance away from hazards or if blocked by obstructions.

There are several types of eyewash stations including:

- Self-contained wall-mounted units (units require ongoing maintenance for adding preservatives and testing).
- Plumbed-in station units.
- Combination units (equipment includes both an emergency eyewash and shower).
- Portable bottles (used for immediate flushing before proceeding to a designated eyewash station).

### General Steps to Operate an Eyewash Station Include:



Emergency Use Procedure

1. Use an eyewash bottle for the initial flush if the 15-minute eyewash station is not within the immediate vicinity.
2. Activate the eyewash station unit by pushing the designated lever.
3. Hold eyelids open.
4. Flush your eyes by lowering them into the stream of water coming from the nozzle; do not aim the water directly at the eyes.
5. Remove contact lenses (if applicable) as soon as possible to reduce the trapping of chemicals. Do not delay flushing during this step.
6. Flush eyes for a **minimum of 15 minutes** (longer flush times may be required depending on the substance). Flush time information is contained within the specific chemical's SDS. Rolling your eyes around enhances the effectiveness of the rinse, remain holding eyes open.
7. After flushing is complete, seek medical attention immediately and report to your



# SAFETY TALKS

## Emergency Eyewash Use

### Safety Tips

- ✓ Identify areas within the workplace that use or store chemicals, or may expose workers to hazardous, irritating, or corrosive substances.
- ✓ Keep emergency eyewash stations accessible, maintained, cleaned, and inspected regularly as per Regulations and ANSI Standards.
- ✓ Read and understand the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) before using chemicals. The worker should be familiar with the hazards, PPE requirements, and Safe Work Procedures for all the chemicals that you work with.
- ✓ Use all personal protective equipment provided to you.
- ✓ Ask to be trained in emergency eyewash procedures and how to locate emergency eyewash equipment.
- ✓ Report any incidents or near misses immediately to your employer or supervisor and seek medical attention if necessary.
- ✓ Locate inspection tags on the eyewash station to document weekly inspections.
- ✓ Portable units must be changed regularly and have added preservatives as per manufacturers' instructions.
- ✓ Maintain a 3-foot clearance in front of eyewash stations to keep them clear and accessible. A best practice is to paint or add taped lines to ensure the eyewash station is always accessible in an emergency.

### Demonstrate

Show workers what to look for when conducting an inspection.

Review an SDS with workers for common chemicals used.

Have workers demonstrate procedures to follow in case of an incident.

### Discussion

What areas in the facility store chemicals or have high-risk practices (i.e. metal grinding)?

Who is responsible for inspecting and maintaining the emergency eyewash stations in your workplace?

#### DID YOU KNOW?

The first 10-15 seconds after exposure to a hazardous substance, especially a corrosive substance, are critical. Delaying treatment, even for a few seconds, may cause serious injury.



**Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation**

Part 21 - Emergency Washing Facilities

ANSI Standard Z358.1 - American National Standard for Emergency Eyewash and Shower Equipment

**Workers Involved in this Safety Talk**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Signature

Name	Signature

**Notes**

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