

## EYEWASH STATIONS

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At one time or another, we have all had something in our eyes..... an eyelash, a speck of dust, or even a tiny piece of something that caught us by surprise. And we all know how that little *tiny* speck of annoyance will drive you *nuts* until you are free from the grips of its irritation! Now.... just imagine something exponentially worse. Suddenly, you get something corrosive in your eyes, like bleach, or battery acid; something that immediately sends you into a panic, as the burning sensation starts to become overwhelming. Your first reaction, *though wrong*, is to rub your eyes...but then you realize you need to flush them with water ...and fast! But where? How?

OSHA addresses this very issue in the workplace. The **OSHA requirements** for emergency **eyewashes** and showers, are found at 29 CFR 1910.151(c), specify that:

*“Where the eyes or body of any person may be exposed to injurious corrosive materials, suitable facilities for quick drenching or flushing of the eyes and body shall be provided within the work area for immediate use.”*

A reminder for proper usage of eyewashes in the workplace:

1. **Access your facility and tasks:** Are there any chemicals you store or use that may expose employees to corrosive materials? Common areas/task include battery charging stations, chemical manufacturing, and janitorial tasks. *If in doubt.... employers can look at Section 2 of an SDS to help determine if an eyewash/shower is required. Look for statements such as “severe skin burns and eye damage”; “serious eye damage”; or “serious eye irritation.”*
2. **Purchase an eyewash (body as needed):** A couple of important things to remember when purchasing the right unit:
  - ✓ Only purchase and use emergency showers that can deliver flushing fluid at a minimum of **20 gallons per minute for a minimum of 15 minutes**. Most

US companies sell only equipment that meets ANSI\*\* standards. Eyewash units such as the large green wall mounted, facet mounted, or fully plumbed stations are good choices based upon your needs, as long as they meet those standards.

- ✓ Handheld bottles DO NOT meet the OSHA requirements when an eye wash station is required. These are great for where plumbed or self-contained units can't reasonably be provided (i.e. outside) in the immediate work area, **but only as a support for employees to reach a unit that can provide at least 15 minutes of continuous flushing fluid.**



### 3. Install station near exposure(s):

- ✓ Workers need to be able to reach an eyewash station **within 10 seconds (or within 55 feet)** of the hazard. If your hazard is more than this, consider using bottle station above as additional support to reach a 15-minute flushing unit.
- ✓ Additionally, location of the shower or eyewash facility must be on the same level as the hazard and easily accessible, clearly marked and well lighted.
- ✓ Emergency showers shall be designed, manufactured and installed in such a manner that, once activated, they can be used without requiring the use of the operator's hands.

### 4. Inspect, Inspect, Inspect:

Always follow the Manufacturers recommendations first...where there is not information or in addition to this information complete the following ANSI\*\* requirements:

- ✓ All eyewashes shall be inspected annually to assure conformance with this standard.

#### Showers:

- ✓ Plumbed emergency showers shall be activated weekly for a period long enough to verify operation and ensure that flushing fluid is available.
- ✓ Self-contained emergency showers shall be visually checked weekly to determine if flushing fluid needs to be changed or supplemented.

#### Eyewashes:

- ✓ Plumbed eyewashes shall be activated weekly for a period long enough to verify operation and ensure that flushing fluid is available.
- ✓ Self-contained eyewashes shall be visually checked weekly to determine if flushing fluid needs to be changed or supplemented. Such inspection shall be conducted in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

*\*\*While not having the force of a regulation under the OSH Act, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard addressing emergency eyewash and shower equipment (ANSI [Z]358.1) provide good information for employers to strongly consider. OSHA Compliance can and often sites such standards as part of "maintaining a workplace free from known...hazards."*

**Resources:** ANSI Z358. 1-2014 standard  
Photos: OSHA.gov & Scott VDB

## EXAMPLES OF EYEWASH STATIONS



*Note: Pictures are examples of eyewash stations and are not an endorsement of any manufacturer, supplier, distributor, type, or model.*

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