

EMERGENCY EYEWASH QUICK SHEET

Plumbed in and portable eye wash systems are essential response tools to any incident involving hazardous liquids, dust or debris contaminating the eyes/face.

Eye wash basins and portable tanks provide decontamination of the eyes and or face without having to soak the entire body.

EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Under the 1981 Health and Safety First Aid Regulations employers have a duty to provide "adequate and appropriate" facilities for implementing first aid, ensuring employees have knowledge of the equipment as well as its location. As well as this, it is an employer's duty under The Health and Safety at Work Act to conduct a risk assessment which considers these factors and to then implement appropriate measures.

THE 10 SECOND RULE



The Internationally recognised standard ANSI Z358.1 2014 recommends that: Emergency eyewash and shower equipment should be available for immediate use, but in no instance should it take an individual longer than 10 seconds to reach the nearest facility.

There are several factors that might influence the location of emergency facilities. It is recognized that the average person covers a distance of approximately 17m in 10 seconds when walking at a normal pace. The physical and emotional state of a potential victim (visually impaired, with some level of discomfort/pain, and possibly in a state of panic) should be considered along with the likelihood of personnel in the immediate area to assist.

HSE GUIDANCE



According to the Health & Safety Executive, the following guidance is advised:

Small burns & scalds



Treat by flushing the affected area with plenty of clean cool water

Chemical burns



Flush affected parts of the body with plenty of clean, cool water ensuring that all the chemical is so diluted as to be rendered harmless

Foreign bodies



The eye must be irrigated with clean, cool water if the object cannot be removed. Chemicals in eyes should be treated by flushing the open eye with clean, cool water for at least 5 to 10 minutes or even longer if there is any doubt.

The contaminated area should be treated by flushing for at least 15 minutes.

LOCATING OF EYEWASH FACILITIES/EQUIPMENT

In general, each unit should be located with the following intentions in mind:

1. Each unit should be located on the same floor as the hazard i.e. the user should not have to travel up or downstairs.
2. The unit should be clear of any impediments or obstacles.
3. The equipment should be well sign posted and the area around the unit should be well lit.

TESTING

All safety equipment should be subjected to weekly (recorded) testing and maintenance checks to ensure that it is ready for use. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for information on how to carry this out.

TRAINING

It is vital to ensure that all employees are trained in the use of emergency decontamination equipment. They should also be familiar with the locations of all emergency decontamination equipment on site. This also applies to any "contract" staff coming on site to work in areas where they may become contaminated.

HOW TO USE AN EMERGENCY EYEWASH

If your eyes come into contact with a hazardous material you should follow the below instructions

- 1. Act decisively** - Move quickly to the treatment station as the longer a hazardous substance is in contact with the eyes, the more damage it can do. Even small amounts of contamination can cause serious injury and even permanent loss of vision.
- 2. Activate the unit** - The eye wash will be fitted with a stay-open valve so there is no need to keep holding the activation "paddle" it once activated.
- 3. Flush out your eyes** - Use your fingers to keep your eyelids open then lower your face into the water streams, all the while moving your eyes up and down and side to side to ensure maximum exposure.
- 4. Contact lenses** - If you wear contact lenses you should remove them as soon as possible and then continue to flush your eyes. You should not reuse the contact lenses, best practice is to dispose of them and fit new ones.
- 5. Keep on flushing** - It is important that you use the eye wash for a full 15 minutes as this is the minimum amount of time it takes to sufficiently clear the eyes of harmful chemicals.
- 6. After flushing** - Following the 15 minutes flushing it is important that professional medical assistance is sought. Do not attempt to drive yourself as your vision may be impaired.