

"For safety's sake—do something."

Chemical Exposure: Safety Shower & Eyewash Station

Ten seconds. That's about the same amount of time that it takes to tie your shoelaces or to fold a t-shirt. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), that's also the longest it should take anyone to reach a safety shower or eyewash station if they are splashed with a hazardous chemical. Emergency showers and eyewash stations are a last line of defense. Being able to get to a safety shower and eyewash station quickly, and knowing how to operate it, are two vital first aid elements.

The first 10 to 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. Safety showers and eyewash stations provide on-the-spot decontamination. They allow workers to flush away hazardous substances that can cause injury.

OSHA 29 CFR 1910.151(c) focuses on emergency safety showers and eyewash stations. It states, "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." When it comes to the location and distance of safety showers and eyewash stations, OSHA refers companies to ANSI/ISEA Z358.1-2014. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) specifies "The location of emergency safety showers must be on the same level as the potential hazard requiring their use. They must be free from obstructions and well-lit with clear signage to make it easy for people to find. Under no circumstances should it take longer than 10 seconds to move from the incident to the safety shower."

How to use a Safety Shower & Eyewash Station



- After exposure, go IMMEDIATELY to the safety shower or eyewash station, as time is of the essence.
- Activate the pull handle (safety shower) or actuator (eyewash station).
- Rinse your body or eyes for 15 minutes. If you are wearing contacts, gently remove them while flushing.
- Have a co-worker notify the proper medical personnel.

Activation of a safety shower or eyewash station is considered first aid treatment by OSHA, and must be documented as such.

Ensure that you report any safety shower or eyewash station activations to your manager, safety department, and the client's health and safety department as soon as possible.

