

8/27/09

Contact Lenses in Chemistry Labs

Hi all,

Yesterday I was asked if Maine has any regulations restricting the wearing of contact lenses in science laboratories, in particular, in chemistry labs. In this case there are no statutes or rules that direct us. However, where there are no specific regulations it is legally advisable that teachers and administrators are guided by professional best practices. The reference here that is most appropriate is the collection of OSHA safety requirements for employees (teachers).

OSHA general industry regulations Appendix A lists OSHA recommendations.

The general rules *recommend* that contact lenses are used only as necessary in laboratory work. (see General Rules below)

OSHA general industry regulations *require* that all employees who work with chemicals use appropriate protections. In the case of eyes this means the use of **splash protection goggles and hoods**. Impact goggles are not sufficient. The same standard should be applied to students. (See below.)

In short, in the laboratory, contact lenses should be avoided if possible, splash goggles are a MUST for everyone, and hoods should be used to manage vapors.

Regulations (Standards - 29 CFR)

[General Rules. - 1910.1450 Appendix A](#)

Regulations (Standards - 29 CFR) - Table of Contents

- Part Number: 1910
- Part Title: Occupational Safety and Health Standards
- Subpart: I
- Standard Number: 1910.1450 Appendix A

1. General Rules

The following should be used for essentially all laboratory work with chemicals:

(a) Accidents and spills - Eye Contact: Promptly flush eyes with water for a prolonged period (15 minutes) and seek medical attention (33, 172).

Ingestion: Encourage the victim to drink large amounts of water (178).

Skin Contact: Promptly flush the affected area with water (33, 172, 178) and remove any contaminated clothing (172, 178). If symptoms persist after washing, seek medical attention (33).

Clean-up. Promptly clean up spills, using appropriate protective apparel and

equipment and proper disposal (24, 33). See pp. 233-237 for specific clean-up recommendations.

(b) Avoidance of "routine" exposure: Develop and encourage safe habits (23); avoid unnecessary exposure to chemicals by any route (23);

Do not smell or taste chemicals (32). Vent apparatus which may discharge toxic chemicals (vacuum pumps, distillation columns, etc.) into local exhaust devices (199).

Inspect gloves (157) and test glove boxes (208) before use.

Do not allow release of toxic substances in cold rooms and warm rooms, since these have contained recirculated atmospheres (209).

(c) Choice of chemicals: Use only those chemicals for which the quality of the available ventilation system is appropriate (13).

(d) Eating, smoking, etc.: Avoid eating, drinking, smoking, gum chewing, or application of cosmetics in areas where laboratory chemicals are present (22, 24, 32, 40); wash hands before conducting these activities (23, 24).

Avoid storage, handling, or consumption of food or beverages in storage areas, refrigerators, glassware or utensils which are also used for laboratory operations (23, 24, 226).

(e) Equipment and glassware: Handle and store laboratory glassware with care to avoid damage; do not use damaged glassware (25). Use extra care with Dewar flasks and other evacuated glass apparatus; shield or wrap them to contain chemicals and fragments should implosion occur (25). Use equipment only for its designed purpose (23, 26).

(f) Exiting: Wash areas of exposed skin well before leaving the laboratory (23).

(g) Horseplay: Avoid practical jokes or other behavior which might confuse, startle or distract another worker (23).

(h) Mouth suction: Do not use mouth suction for pipeting or starting a siphon (23, 32).

(i) Personal apparel: Confine long hair and loose clothing (23, 158). Wear shoes at all times in the laboratory but do not wear sandals, perforated shoes, or sneakers (158).

(j) Personal housekeeping: Keep the work area clean and uncluttered, with chemicals and equipment being properly labeled and stored; clean up the work area on completion of an operation or at the end of each day (24).

(k) Personal protection: Assure that appropriate eye protection (154-156) is worn by all persons, including visitors, where chemicals are stored or handled (22, 23, 33, 154).

Wear appropriate gloves when the potential for contact with toxic materials exists (157); inspect the gloves before each use, wash them before removal, and replace

them periodically (157). (A table of resistance to chemicals of common glove materials is given p. 159).

Use appropriate (164-168) respiratory equipment when air contaminant concentrations are not sufficiently restricted by engineering controls (164-5), inspecting the respirator before use (169).

Use any other protective and emergency apparel and equipment as appropriate (22, 157-162).

Avoid use of contact lenses in the laboratory unless necessary; if they are used, inform supervisor so special precautions can be taken (155).

Remove laboratory coats immediately on significant contamination (161).

(l) Planning: Seek information and advice about hazards (7), plan appropriate protective procedures, and plan positioning of equipment before beginning any new operation (22, 23).

(m) Unattended operations: Leave lights on, place an appropriate sign on the door, and provide for containment of toxic substances in the event of failure of a utility service (such as cooling water) to an unattended operation (27, 128).

(n) Use of hood: Use the hood for operations which might result in release of toxic chemical vapors or dust (198-9).

As a rule of thumb, use a hood or other local ventilation device when working with any appreciably volatile substance with a TLV of less than 50 ppm (13).

Confirm adequate hood performance before use; keep hood closed at all times except when adjustments within the hood are being made (200); keep materials stored in hoods to a minimum and do not allow them to block vents or air flow (200).

Leave the hood "on" when it is not in active use if toxic substances are stored in it or if it is uncertain whether adequate general laboratory ventilation will be maintained when it is "off" (200).

(o) Vigilance: Be alert to unsafe conditions and see that they are corrected when detected (22).

(p) Waste disposal: Assure that the plan for each laboratory operation includes plans and training for waste disposal (230).

Deposit chemical waste in appropriately labeled receptacles and follow all other waste disposal procedures of the Chemical Hygiene Plan (22, 24).

Do not discharge to the sewer concentrated acids or bases (231); highly toxic, malodorous, or lachrymatory substances (231); or any substances which might interfere with the biological activity of waste water treatment plants, create fire or explosion hazards, cause structural damage or obstruct flow (242).

(q) Working alone: Avoid working alone in a building; do not work alone in a laboratory if the procedures being conducted are hazardous (28).

Regulations (Standards - 29 CFR)

Eye and face protection. - 1910.133

Regulations (Standards - 29 CFR) - Table of Contents

- Part Number: 1910
- Part Title: Occupational Safety and Health Standards
- Subpart: I
- Subpart Title: Personal Protective Equipment
- Standard Number: 1910.133
- Title: Eye and face protection.
1910.133(a)

General requirements.

1910.133(a)(1)

The employer shall ensure that each affected employee uses appropriate eye or face protection when exposed to eye or face hazards from flying particles, molten metal, liquid chemicals, acids or caustic liquids, chemical gases or vapors, or potentially injurious light radiation.

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