

OSHA Emergency Eye Wash Requirements

Introduction

The Occupational Safety and Health Act was enacted to make sure workers were provided with safe working conditions. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has two different types of regulations, general and specific, which apply to emergency eye wash and shower equipment.

The first type of regulation is a general requirement for emergency equipment. This general regulation is as follows:

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 emergency use.

This general regulation is applicable to all facilities that require the installation of emergency eye wash and shower equipment as a form of first aid. This applies to most organizations operating pools and with general chemical storage.

These regulations specify where and when emergency eye wash and shower equipment must be available. These regulations do not specify minimum operating requirements or installation set-up requirements.

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) developed the ANSI standard Z358.1-1990 and was revised in 2004. This standard helps in selecting and installing emergency equipment to meet OSHA requirements.

The standard allows for either a Plumbed Eye Wash (unit permanently connected to potable water source) or a Gravity-Feed Eye Wash (device that contains its own flushing fluid and must be refilled or replaced after use).

Plumbed or Gravity-Feed Eye Wash Stations:

- Heads positioned 33"-45" from floor and 6" from wall or nearest obstruction
- Provide water flow at 0.4 gallons per minute (GPM) for 15 minutes
- Plumbed units shall provide flushing fluid at 30 PSI
- Temperature can range from 60°F for the lower limit and 100°F as the upper limit
- Units must activate in 1 second or less with a stay-open valve (leaving hands free)
- Eyewash equipment shall be located in an area that requires no more than 10 seconds to reach
- The location of the eye wash unit shall be in a well-lit area and identified with a sign
- Eyewash equipment shall be on the same level as the hazard
- Plumbed eye wash units shall be activated weekly to verify proper operation
- Gravity-feed units shall be maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions
- All employees who might be exposed to a chemical splash shall be trained in the use of the equipment
- All eyewash equipment shall be inspected annually to make sure they meet ANSI requirements

Notes:

- Saline solution contains a preservative to help reduce the bacterial growth and only needs to be replaced every six months.
- Personal eye wash units such as spray bottles can provide immediate flushing when they are located near hazards. Personal eye wash equipment does not meet the requirements of plumbed or gravity-feed eye wash equipment. Personal eye wash units can support plumbed or gravity-feed eye wash units, but cannot be a substitute.

Organizations should review any local or state regulations that may have additional requirements to those outlined by federal OSHA