10 Essential Tips for Emergency Eyewash Stations



A chemical eye injury is something to avoid at all costs; it is a painful and frightening experience and one that may leave a person blinded for life. So if your employees are exposed to hazardous chemicals and other substances, it's imperative that you do everything you can to ensure that your emergency eyewash stations meet the required safety standards to best protect workers. Here are some suggestions.

1. **Keep the doors open.** Do not place an emergency eyewash station behind a closed or locked door. While the station may be used infrequently, remember that when it's needed, someone's vision is on the line. And every second counts.
2. **Don't hang the unit at an angle.** This can interfere with the proper flow of flushing fluid and may force an injured person to stand in an uncomfortable position to flush properly for the duration of his or her 15-minute required flush.
3. **Don't block access.** Avoid storing anything underneath or in front of an eyewash unit. This can block an injured worker's ability to reach or stand comfortably at the station.
4. **Watch the fluid's temperature.** Do not allow the flushing fluid to become too hot or too cold. Storing eyewash in extremely hot or cold environments can cause flushing fluid's temperature to rise or fall outside of ANSI's stated standard for tepid water. Flushing eyes with scalding or ice-cold solution can cause further damage to an already compromised eye.
5. **Fill the unit properly.** Avoid mistakes when mixing flushing fluid. ANSI requires that the unit be filled with flushing fluid or the pre-packaged fluid provided by the manufacturer. Always prepare fluid according to manufacturer's instructions.
6. **Clean thoroughly after use.** Don't forget to clean, disinfect, rinse and completely dry the unit after each activation, including hoses, nozzles and nozzle covers (this does not apply to sealed-fluid cartridges). Any lingering cleaning chemicals or particles may harm the next user's eyes. When the wrong chemicals mix, the fluid may turn brown or another color, and colored fluid is never usable.
7. **Don't cover the unit.** Do not place a plastic bag or other makeshift cover over the unit to keep dust or particles out. This can hinder an injured person's ability to properly activate the unit in a single motion and start the flow in one second or less.
8. **Mind the shelf life.** Avoid using expired flushing fluid. Like any standing water, eyewash fluid can grow bacteria that may be harmful to eyes. Be sure that someone is responsible for checking stations' expiration dates and

refilling/replacing them according to the manufacturer’s guidelines. Generally, according to ANSI Z358.1-2009, weekly flushing is required for plumbed stations every three to six months for tank-style fluid stations and every two to three years for sealed-fluid cartridges and bottles.

9. **Install the unit correctly.** Do not install an eyewash unit without carefully following the manufacturer’s instructions. Stations vary and have precise installation instructions to ensure proper performance, including installation height, the rate of fluid flow, required spray pattern and much more.
10. **Don’t alter or tamper with the unit.** Again, the manufacturer’s instructions are the only ones that should be followed. Do not try to re-route hoses, change nozzles or otherwise compromise the station’s performance.

Conclusion

Eyes are one of the most vulnerable parts of the body. By understanding how to use emergency eyewash properly, your facility can ensure greater workplace eye safety. And that’s a clear benefit everyone can see.