

“Keeping Your Skin Injury Free?”

(Provided by Safety Consultation and Training Section-Nevada Division of Industrial Relations)



Maintaining healthy, intact skin and preventing skin injury is important both at work and at home. A large portion of occupational illnesses involve injury to skin tissue in the form of irritation, inflammation, and chemical burns. But not all skin injuries are work related. Each year thousands of people suffer tissue injury from exposures to plants, bacteria and chemicals commonly found around the house. Exposures to plants such as poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac can produce severe and painful irritation. Exposures to bacteria and fungi can also cause irritation and infection. Improper use and over exposure to household cleaners, pesticides and other chemicals can cause skin damage.

There are three key elements to protecting our skin. **First, we must be able to recognize the hazards of harmful substances we may encounter.** Product labels and Material Safety Data Sheets provide information about the hazards associated with the materials that you may be working around or using. These resources should always be consulted to make sure that the harmful properties of a substance are understood.

Secondly, safe work practices, should be used when working with materials that are potentially harmful. Every precaution should be taken to avoid skin and eye contact with hazardous substances. When using chemical agents, it is advisable to practice good personal hygiene and wash your hands before and after using the restroom to avoid contamination to other body areas. If your skin is accidentally exposed to a harmful substance, the risk of serious injury can be reduced if you are familiar with first aid procedures for that particular product. You should seek medical attention immediately if you experience any changes in the skin from an exposure to a substance.

Third, use appropriate personal protective clothing and equipment. It is important to understand that no single piece of protective clothing and equipment can protect you from all types of hazardous substances. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations, and select the personal protective clothing and equipment that will protect you from specific hazards of a substance.

When working with any harmful substance on the job, work areas should be kept clean and free of debris, and containers should be labeled and stored according to established state and Federal regulations and your company's safety policy. You should also know the location of eyewash stations and emergency showers. In the event of accidental exposure, notify your supervisor immediately.