

# **11 - Skin Protection: Safety Training**

EH&S – MGA

**Goals: This safety session should teach you to:**

- A. Be more aware of potential skin problems on the job.
- B. Know the personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene procedures to avoid them.

**OSHA Regulations: 29 CFR 1910.1200 (Hazard Communication) and 1910.132 (Personal Protection Equipment)**

**1. Our skin protects us, and we need to protect it.**

- A. Skin disease is the most common on-the-job illness.
- B. Our skin serves as a vital barrier to protect us from germs, chemicals, wind, cold, and heat.
- C. The skin contains small openings, or pores, that let us perspire.
- D. Those invisible openings, however, can also allow hazardous substances into the body if the skin is not protected properly.

**2. There are many common causes of skin problems.**

- A. Cuts and abrasions let bacteria in and lead to infections.
- B. Cold can lead to chapped, sensitive skin, and frostbite can actually destroy skin.
- C. Heat and overexposure to sun can lead to skin burns.
- D. Biological agents, such as bacteria, fungi, or viruses, can also cause skin problems.
- E. Insect bites and poisonous plants can lead to allergic reactions, rashes, and infections.
- F. Exposure to chemicals can also lead to an assortment of skin problems—ranging from minor to life threatening.

**3. Proper PPE can sharply reduce your chance of skin infections.**

- A. The right choice of gloves can protect your hands from many hazards.
  - 1. Wear warm or insulated gloves in cold weather, and watch out for signs of possible frostbite.
  - 2. Wear lightweight gloves when working outdoors in hot weather.
  - 3. Work gloves can protect you from poisonous plants and insect bites.
  - 4. Latex gloves can protect you from bloodborne pathogens and exposure to many chemicals.
  - 5. Special gloves may be needed to protect you from corrosives (strong acids or bases) that can burn your skin.
- B. Follow directions on Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) and product labels to determine exactly what type of PPE is necessary.
- C. For some chemicals, gloves alone may be insufficient—you may need an apron or full body suit as well.

**4. Identify the skin hazards associated with your job and take precautions.**

- A. Take cuts and abrasions seriously—wash, disinfect, and bandage them immediately.
- B. If a wound shows signs of infection, seek proper medical attention before the problem gets serious.
- C. Use moisturizing lotions to protect your skin from chapping in cold weather.
- D. Use strong sunscreen and limit your exposure to hot sun to prevent sunburn.
- E. Use insect repellents to reduce your chance of bites and stings.
- F. In addition to wearing gloves, always wash well as soon as possible after any chance of exposure to poisonous plants or to any chemical irritants.
- G. Barrier creams can protect your hands from mild irritants if you are unable to use gloves for a particular operation.

**5. Chemical hazards in the workplace can create a variety of skin hazards.**

- A. Exposure to chemicals can cause a skin condition known as dermatitis.
- B. Symptoms of dermatitis include redness, rashes, itching, and swelling
- C. In addition, you can develop an allergic reaction known as sensitization.
- D. Both may appear after only one exposure or after repeated exposures.
- E. Once you become sensitized to a substance, you may have a strong reaction to even a minor exposure.
- F. Many workers who use latex gloves regularly may become sensitized to latex and should switch to nonlatex materials immediately if they begin to develop a problem.

**6. Follow safety and health guidelines.**

- A. Read the SDS for the substances you are using. You may be able to reduce your risk by substituting a less hazardous substance.
- B. Act promptly if you are exposed to hazardous substances or other irritants.
- C. Wash all exposed parts of your body, including hair, thoroughly for several minutes.
- D. Use a mild soap; avoid harsh industrial detergents that can cause further irritation.
- E. See a doctor if you have persistent signs of irritation or infection.

**Summation:**

Some occupational skin diseases can cause long-lasting problems, so it is very important to protect your skin at both work and home.