Eye Wash Stations – Maintenance, Care & Use (Safety Brief)

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PACIF has developed Safety Briefs to help municipal highway supervisors maintain a high level of safety and hazard awareness among employees. We recommend using these short "tailgate trainings" on a regular basis – and **at least once a month**. If you need a particular safety topic, please contact us at losscontrol@vlct.org

Information for Supervisors

Most public works operations have products in use that are classified as irritants or corrosives. Degreasing chemicals can "defat" the skin and damage sensitive eye tissues. Many heavy duty cleaning products contain a high pH chemical such as lye which is corrosive and damaging to skin and clothing. There may also be exposure to battery acid in some operations. Some paints and coatings also contain chemicals that can damage the eye. Lastly dust or dirt in the eyes is not uncommon.

The best way to tell whether you need an eye wash is to review the **safety data sheet (SDS)**. Section 4 lists first aid measures. If there is mention of "flushing the eyes for 15 minutes", this is interpreted by VOSHA inspectors as requiring an eye wash.

Talking Points for Training

Make sure the eye wash can be easily accessed within 10 seconds from areas of chemical use. The travel path should be free from obstacles. To make sure the eye wash is always ready when needed, there are several rules of thumb that all employees should help monitor. Please remind your employees of the following:

- Every eye wash needs to be readily accessible. This means that items and equipment cannot be stored in front of it. Travel paths should also be maintained so that the unit can be accessed quickly and easily when needed.

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- Remind every employee where the eye wash is located. They need to be able to find it when they have something highly irritating in one or both eyes.
- If the unit is not plumbed, it will contain a commercial eye wash solution (usually water plus an additive). The solution will require periodic replacement, as directed by the manufacturer of that solution/additive. Do not use plain water!
- For non-plumbed units, it is wise to maintain a log of when the solution was changed. If the eye wash is plumbed, the unit should be "operated" at least monthly (ideally more frequently) to ensure that the water supply is adequate and to flush out dust, debris and potential bacterial contaminants. Maintain a log of the periodic flushing of plumbed units. Recent studies have found that plumbed eye washes that are not periodically tested/used can contain bacteria that can infect the eyes of users. Thus, periodic flushing keeps the unit clean and ready for use.
- Remind employees how to use the eye wash. The unit should be operated to initiate the flow of water, then the employee should use their fingers to pry open the eye or eyes that have the problem. The tendency is to want to close the eyelids–so using the fingers to pry them open is a necessity. In summary, keep the eye wash accessible, ready and clean. It will serve you well if you ever need it-and help you avoid a citation.

Safety Training Attendance Roster

Trainer:	Training Date:
1.	9.
2.	10.
3.	11.
4.	12.
5.	13.

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6.	14.
7.	15.
8.	16.

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