Saving Your Skin and the Skin of Our Customers

What is a cement burn and what can we do to prevent it?

Physicians call cement-related skin problems contact dermatitis, of which there are two types: irritant and allergic. Irritant contact dermatitis - what most people call a cement burn - is a rash caused by skin contact with a chemical or substance that causes direct injury to skin cells. Alkalinity, abrasiveness and the hygroscopic (that means it is able to absorb moisture from the atmosphere or your skin) nature of wet concrete is the cause of irritant contact dermatitis. This skin problem can be prevented by safe work practices and appropriate personal protective equipment.

Allergic contact dermatitis is a rash caused by skin contact with a chemical substance that penetrates the skin and triggers an allergic reaction. It is estimated that 5% to 15% of workers exposed to wet concrete may be sensitive to concrete in a manner where they need to be concerned about an allergic reaction. Allergic contact dermatitis is a serious medical problem and is much more difficult to control than irritant dermatitis. About the only solution is for the affected person to change job assignments and to stay away from freshly mixed unhardened concrete.

Under the Hazard Communication Standards we, the producer, have a responsibility to inform not only our employees, but our customers about the hazards associated with handling our products. More importantly, it is the right thing to do. We accomplish this by use of our MSDS on freshly mixed unhardened concrete, warnings on our delivery tickets, and word of mouth.

There are bright red warnings on the front of our delivery tickets. Drivers are to make sure that customers are made aware of this warning and to get their signatures on this warning label and where appropriate, provide a warning sheet.

I am not a ready-mix truck driver, but I suspect that those people who need some coaching on the hazardous aspects of concrete handling and finishing are pretty obvious when arriving on the job-site. When an inexperienced customer is encountered, make an extra effort to provide as much information as is possible. Recommend appropriate personal protective equipment to include long sleeved shirts, long pants, boots, gloves, knee pads, and eye protection. Explain that prolonged contact with the product can result in serious skin injury. Warn that soaked clothes should be removed immediately and washed thoroughly prior to reuse. The customer should thoroughly wash skin that was in contact with wet concrete after the job is complete.

The dispatcher or salesman has a part in this warning effort, as well. When the order is taken, the warning information should be passed along and documentation of the effort should be made.

If the customer refuses to heed warnings, please let your supervisor or dispatcher know.

I truly believe that communication is the key to success in this as in most safety issues: management to employee, em-
Supervisor/Foreman/Plant Manager Signature: __________________________________________

Names of those who reviewed this information: ______________________________________

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THIS MONTH: JULY
Cement Burn Awareness

Please maintain a copy of this newsletter for future reference.

If you have any comments or suggestions about this or other safety related topics, please contact Terry Jones or me. Contact Terry by calling (502) 396-8719.

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