

Working With Cement/Concrete

Anyone who uses cement (or mixtures containing it, eg: mortar and concrete) or is responsible for managing or supervising its use, should be aware that it is hazardous to health and safe working practices must be followed.

Concrete and any other material containing cement should be regarded as any other hazardous substance – have an assessment completed and controls included in the method statement where necessary. This includes mixing and placing new, as well as working on hardened material.

Some general points are detailed below:-

- Care must always be taken when using dry cement as considerable damage can result if inhaled. This can be prevented by using an appropriate dust mask.
- In certain conditions, it will be necessary to protect the eyes from cement dust by using goggles.
- Cement in dry form and when mixed to form concrete, grout or mortar can cause Dermatitis and burns to the skin, so avoid contact.
- Always protect the skin by keeping it covered as much as possible. Rubber or plastic gloves should be worn when handling cement or concrete. If you have to work in wet concrete, rubber boots must be worn.
- Should any of your clothing become saturated with wet concrete or mortar, wash and change.
- Cutting of set concrete, especially with abrasive wheels will produce considerable amounts of dust. As well as cement this dust may also contain Silica which can damage the lungs, so always wear the appropriate mask.
- Should any cement, concrete, grout or mortar get into the gloves or down the leg of a rubber boot, it must be removed immediately and the affected area washed thoroughly with clean water. Similarly, any splash on exposed skin should be cleaned off immediately.
- If you use cementitious products you should examine your skin regularly, particularly the hands. Any excessive dryness or cracking, blotching or other abnormality must be reported to the supervisor immediately. This could be the first signs of dermatitis. You should consult your GP as soon as possible if you find any of these symptoms.
- Supervisors should be encouraged to inspect their own and their workers hands for the same signs.
- The choice and provision of the correct protective clothing to safeguard against the use of these substances must follow the recommendations of the COSHH Assessment Sheet
- First Aid for skin or eye contamination should consist of washing with cold, fresh water for at least 10 minutes.

Questions:

- 1 In what ways is cement hazardous?
- 2 How can you protect yourself from cement?
- 3 How can supervisors help in reducing the hazards from cement?

Remember:

Not protecting your skin from cement burns can leave you scarred for life

Further Information:- CIP Manual, Section 25