

Date: April 8, 2003
Updated: May 25, 2007
From: Peggy Munsell, Manager of Standards and Technical Resources
Subject: Tempered Eye Wash Stations

This issue originated as an employer initiated e-mail question on April 8, 2003

Question: There seems to be some confusion about whether or not it is required to have tempered water sources for laboratory eyewash stations. We have one supplier saying that a new OSHA standard was enacted a couple of years ago stating that all eye washes are required to have a tempered water supply if they were installed after 1997. Could you help clarify this?

Answer: Employers who fall under Division 2, General Industry, and are required by the standard to have eyewash or safety showers, are regulated under OAR 437-002-0161, Medical and First Aid.

http://www.cbs.state.or.us/external/osha/pdf/rules/division_2/div2_k.pdf

In general, the regulation includes the following.

1. An unobstructed path; eyewash or shower accessible within 10 seconds.
2. Installation must meet the manufacturer's requirements including criteria for water pressure, flow rate, and system testing.
3. Water must flow for at least 15 minutes. Valves must remain open without the use of hands.
4. Eyewash or shower stations must be clean, sanitary, and operating correctly.

The rule itself does not address temperature except as it relates to freezing. However, Program Directive (A-63), Eyewash and Safety Showers,

<http://www.cbs.state.or.us/external/osha/pdf/pds/pd-063.pdf>

indicates that the ideal temperature range for safety showers is 60 - 95 degree F. One of the purposes of the directive is to assess the adequacies of eyewash/shower facilities which includes a temperature component.

ANSI Z3581.1 - 1998, *Emergency Eyewash and Shower Equipment* defines tepid as moderately warm; lukewarm. It further states that "medical recommendations suggest a flushing fluid at tepid temperature be delivered to affect chemically-injured tissue.



Temperatures in excess of 100 degree F have been proven to be harmful to the eyes and can enhance chemical interaction with the eyes and skin. While cold flushing fluid temperatures provide immediate cooling after chemical contact, prolonged exposure to cold fluids affect the ability to maintain adequate body temperature and can result in the premature cessation of first aid treatment".

OR-OSHA also has a fact sheet relating to the topic.

<http://www.cbs.state.or.us/external/osha/pdf/pubs/fs02.pdf>