Skin hazards—Irritant contact dermatitis (ICD)

List ICD hazards on site.

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Explain dangers

Some materials you use at work can cause a non-infectious skin disease called "dermatitis". There are two types of dermatitis:

1. **Allergic contact dermatitis (ACD)**
2. **Irritant contact dermatitis (ICD).**

ICD is caused by materials that directly damage the skin. Skin becomes dry and tight, swells up, cracks, and can become painful. Hands and forearms are most often affected.

Common causes of ICD on the jobsite include

- Caustics and acids
- Chlorinated solvents
- Wet concrete
- Calcium hydroxide
- Excessive hand washing
- Excess friction
- Hot and cold weather.

You can be at risk of developing ICD from substances that

- Land on your clothes and seep through to your skin
- Fall into your boots and stay there
- Land on your skin and mix with sweat
- Rub against your skin in tight spots such as under your wrist watch
- Splash and land onto your face and neck.

ICD can affect you after just a day of heavy contact or after a longer period of low exposure.

Identify controls

- Know the skin hazards on site. Read the label or safety data sheet (SDS) for any controlled product before using it. Look for phrases such as "skin sensitization" or "skin irritant".
- Use gloves and other protective equipment specific to the hazard (consult the SDS).
- Avoid excessive hand washing and don't work with wet hands.
- Use mild soaps when washing your hands. Don't use solvents.
- Apply hand cream to prevent your skin from drying out.
- Inspect your clothing throughout the shift for contamination, in particular your knees, forearms, and boots. If contaminated, change into dry clothing and wash the affected area.
- If working with wet concrete, tape the top of your boots to your pants, and tape your gloves to your wrists to prevent contact.

Demonstrate

Ask the crew to inspect their hands for signs of dryness, redness, flaking, or cracking. These are early signs of dermatitis and indicate the need for stronger skin protection measures.

Show workers the proper types of gloves and how to prevent materials from contacting their skin or getting trapped in clothing.

Source: Health and Safety Executive