

Cement

List cement hazards on site:

Explain dangers

Portland cement is used in Ontario every day. It can hurt you if:

- It contacts your skin.
- It contacts your eyes.
- It is inhaled.

Cement usually contains a metal called hexavalent chromium. This metal causes allergic dermatitis (i.e., inflammation of the skin).

DRY CEMENT

When you empty a bag of cement, the dust can irritate your skin. The dust reacts with sweat or damp clothing to form a corrosive solution.

Cement dust can also get in your eyes, causing redness, burns, or blindness.

Inhaling cement dust irritates your nose and throat. It can also cause choking and trouble breathing.

WET CEMENT

Cement is also hazardous when it is wet—in mortar or concrete. If it gets inside your boots or gloves, or soaks through your clothes, it can cause burns and skin ulcers.

The burns caused by cement may be slow. You may not feel anything until several hours later. That is why it is important to wash cement off your skin right away.

SILICA

Whether cement is wet or dry, you need to worry about silica. Repeated exposure to airborne silica can lead to silicosis, a disabling and often fatal lung disease. There may also be a link between silica dust and cancer.

Identify controls

WHAT TO WEAR

- Wear an N, R, or P95 mask when pouring or mixing dry cement.
- Wear eye protection for mixing, pouring, and other work with dry cement.
- Wear alkali-resistant gloves.
- Wear coveralls with long sleeves and full-length pants.
- Pull sleeves over gloves.
- When working with wet mortar or concrete, tuck pants inside boots and duct-tape the top.

WHAT TO DO

- Work upwind from cement dust.
- Remove rings and watches. Cement dust can collect underneath and burn your skin.
- Remove any clothing contaminated by cement.
- Do not wash your hands with water from buckets used for cleaning tools.
- If your skin comes in contact with cement, wash with cold running water as soon as possible. Flush out any open sores or cuts. Get medical attention if your skin still feels like it is burning.
- After working with cement, always wash your hands before eating, smoking, drinking, or using the toilet.
- Read the safety data sheet (SDS) for procedures to follow after eye or skin contact with cement.
- If your eyes are exposed to cement, rinse with cold tap water for at least 15 minutes. Get medical attention if necessary.

Demonstrate

With your crew, review the safety information on the SDS for Portland Cement or the WHMIS label on the cement bag.

See related safety talks on Skin hazards—Allergic contact dermatitis (ACD) and Silica.