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WASH YOUR HANDS – GIVE YOURSELF A HAND

We assume everyone knows how to wash their hands, but many workers don't realize how important hand washing and skin care can be in the prevention of disease. Proper skin care and hand protection help keep workers productive and on the job.

The best defense against the spread of illness or skin ailments is to prevent them where possible by washing them often, using barrier creams and wearing gloves designed to protect skin from contact with a variety of harmful agents and irritants. If gloves are worn, clean or replace them frequently to make sure they don't collect or absorb irritants. Check gloves often for wear, cuts or pinholes. Be sure the gloves you choose are the proper type and material to protect against the specific chemical or situation you'll encounter. **Wearing gloves** and practicing personal hygiene, especially regular hand washing, helps prevent:

- Ingestion and absorption of harmful substances
- Spread of infection and diseases
- Occupational skin disease
- Absenteeism due to illness
- Lost work time

There are things employers can do to help workers improve attention to skin care and understand the importance of regular hand washing. For example:

- Include personal hygiene and skin care in the employee orientation program and in regular safety training. Videos, education booklets and trainers' guides are available from State Fund and skin care product manufacturers.
- Maintain an ongoing awareness program to remind workers of the importance of proper skin care. Posters and pamphlets are excellent vehicles for generating awareness about personal hygiene throughout the year.
- Help workers understand that regular hand washing protects against the spread of illness to their family members.

- Conduct a site survey to ensure that proper hand washing/cleaning products are provided in all suitable places throughout the work environment. Washing facilities and skin care products must be assessable to encourage regular hand washing.
- Education and awareness set the pace for good hygiene practices for everyone. It's a simple matter to use plenty of soap and water, appropriate creams and/or gloves to protect the health and safety of your hands.