



Concrete Hazards

Concrete is one of the most commonly used materials in construction. It is a strong and versatile building material that we use for foundations, flooring, walls, and even countertops in some kitchens. But you shouldn't let your guard down even though you probably either work with it yourself or see others using it almost every day. While it can certainly be used safely, you should be aware of the potential hazards of working with concrete.

You might be interested to know that concrete has been around as a building material for thousands of years. Ancient Romans used it to build many structures that still stand today. But the chemical makeup of concrete has changed since the Romans mixed horsehair and blood into it. Nowadays, cement contains substances that are corrosive to human skin; silica, which can irritate the skin and lungs; as well as other hazardous compounds. In order to work safely where cement or concrete is used or installed, keep the following safety tips in mind.

Protect your back. Dry cement is heavy, and wet concrete is even heavier. Use mechanical lifting devices when you need to move heavy loads of concrete. Never lift more than you can handle comfortably. Ask a co-worker for help when you need it. Return the favor when they ask for help.

Protect your lungs. When working with dry cement or cutting through set concrete, corrosive particles can fly into your nose or mouth and cause short-term or long-term health problems. When it's not windy, cement and concrete dust can accumulate around you and find its way into your lungs. Wear a close-fitting mask or respirator when working with dry cement. Bring a change of clothes to work so you don't take the dust back to your car or home. If you inhale dust and you have trouble breathing or can't stop coughing, seek immediate medical attention.

Protect your eyes. Concrete dust can severely damage human skin tissue, including your eyes. Wear close-fitting safety goggles, not just safety glasses, when working around concrete dust. Know where the eyewash station is located. If you do get concrete or cement dust into your eyes, rinse them for at least 15 minutes and seek medical attention immediately afterward.

Protect your skin. When working with cement, you should wear boots and gloves that prevent your skin from coming in contact with it. If you're standing in wet concrete, make sure it doesn't get in over the top of your boots. Wear long sleeves and long gloves. If your skin comes in contact with wet concrete, wash it with cool water and pH



neutral soap. Seek medical attention for burns, rashes, or irritation.

Concrete can be - and is - used safely every day. Make sure you use it safely and avoid injury.

SAFETY REMINDER

Inhaling silica can lead to silicosis, a lung disease that can leave you gasping for breath. Wear the appropriate mask or respirator when working with dry cement.