Health and Safety Fact File

First Aid for Chemical Contacts

The purpose of basic first aid is to preserve life and to prevent or limit the deterioration in a casualty's condition. In incidents involving chemicals it is essential that the casualty is decontaminated without delay in order to prevent further harm. If necessary, first aid must be started before a First Aider arrives. The simple first aid for dealing with the majority of chemical contaminations can be performed without previous experience. For the majority of chemicals the first aid treatment is very similar (see below) and for chemical decontamination involves only clean water. Some substances which do not mix with water will require soap and water for removal. **DO NOT use solvents for this purpose.**

However, for a few substances use of an antidote or specifc treatment is vital - click on the links for further information.

- Cryogenic liquids
- Cyanides
- Hydrofluoric acid
- Phenol

DO NOT use any other lotion or medication to treat chemical contacts/injuries

Basic Fist Aid for Chemical Incidents

Commence the following First Aid and, as soon as practicable, call nearest First Aider.

Skin Contact:

1. Drench the affected area with clean running water for at least 10 minutes and until no chemical remains in contact with the skin.
2. Remove contaminated clothing, which is not stuck to the skin, as soon as practicable after commencement of washing.
3. If there is any injury cover with clean, non-fluffy material to protect from infection and, or if skin absorption is suspected, transfer casualty to hospital.

Eye Contact:

1. Flush the eye with clean running water for at least 10 minutes.
2. Obtain medical examination of the affected eye.

Ingestion:

1. Do not make the casualty vomit.
2. Wash out the mouth with water.
3. Give 1 pint (500 ml) of water to drink.
4. Transfer casualty to hospital.

Inhalation:

1. Remove the casualty from exposure.
2. Rest and keep warm.
3. If the casualty has been seriously affected obtain medical attention.

For further information see the Health and Safety Executive First Aid Website

Further advice is available from the Health and Safety Unit:
First aid for chemical incidents, contact Dr Fred Young

Basic first aid, contact: Occupational Health