

Emergency Showers & Eyewash Stations – Know the Laws of Your Province



An average 200 Canadian workers suffer an eye injury on the job each day. Many of these injuries are the result of chemical splashes or burns that cause a corrosive substance to get into the eye (or on the skin). The first 10 to 15 seconds after exposure are critical. Delaying treatment, even for a few seconds, may contribute to serious injury. That's why OHS laws require employers to provide emergency showers and eyewash stations that workers can use if their eyes or skin are exposed to a corrosive or other hazardous substance.

However, actual OHS requirements vary by jurisdiction. BC has the strictest rules. It requires employers to carry out a hazard assessment, characterize their workplace as high, moderate or low risk, and install specific kinds of emergency shower and eyewash facilities corresponding with those risks. Several jurisdictions require emergency showers and eyewash facilities to meet specific ANSI standards, namely, some version of ANSI/ISEA Z358.1, American National Standard for Emergency Eyewash and Shower Equipment. By contrast, many other jurisdictions take a more general approach stipulating when emergency eyewash facilities are required and leaving the employer discretion to select the appropriate kinds of equipment.

Here's a summary of the emergency eyewash rules in each part of Canada.

Emergency Shower & Eyewash Requirements Across Canada

FEDERAL

1. Employer must ensure that shower facilities to wash the skin and eye wash facilities to irrigate the eyes are provided for immediate use by employees if a hazard for skin or eye injury from a hazardous substance exists in the workplace;
2. If it's not feasible to comply with subsection (1), employer must provide portable equipment that may be used in place of the facilities referred to in subsection (1); and
3. If, due to adverse or extreme weather conditions, it's not feasible to comply with either subsection (1) or (2), employer must provide, for all employees likely to be exposed to hazardous substances in the workplace, personal protection equipment for all parts of their bodies that may be exposed (*COHS Regs.*, Sec. 16.8)

ALBERTA

1. Employer must, if a worker may be contaminated by a harmful substance at a work site,: (a) provide the facilities, including showers, the worker needs to remove the contamination before leaving the work site, and (b) ensure that only those articles and clothing that have been properly decontaminated or cleaned are taken from the work site by the worker; and
2. Employer must ensure that workers at a work site where chemicals harmful to the eyes or skin are used have

immediate access at the work site to emergency baths, showers, eye wash equipment, or other equipment appropriate for the potential level of exposure (*OHS Code*, Secs. 23 + 24)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Employer must ensure that:

1. Appropriate emergency washing facilities are provided within a work area where a worker's eyes or skin may be exposed to harmful or corrosive materials or other materials which may burn or irritate;
2. Only a potable water supply is used for a plumbed emergency eyewash facility;
3. Only potable water or an isotonic saline flushing solution is used for a portable (non-plumbed) eyewash unit;
4. Access to emergency eyewash and shower facilities isn't blocked by material or equipment;
5. Selection of emergency washing facilities is based on an assessment of the risks present in the workplace, according to Table 5-2 of the Regs. which classifies different types of workplaces as High, Moderate, and Low Risk;
6. Emergency eyewash and shower facilities are provided and located as specified in Table 5-3, except if it's not practicable to provide a permanent water supply, such as at a remote or transient worksite (Note: Table 5-3 requirements for tempered water also don't apply if a medical professional indicates that tempered washing would increase the risk of injury in a particular application);
7. Portable self-contained units are provided, where it's not practicable to provide a permanent water supply at transient worksites such as construction sites and those portable self-contained units are capable of delivering

a minimum flush duration of 15 minutes (or more if required by the nature of the material) if there's a high or a moderate risk of injury to the eyes or skin;

8. If it's not practicable to provide a portable self-contained unit, effective means to flush the eyes or skin, based upon an assessment of the risk, is reasonably available at a remote worksite;
9. Emergency eyewash and shower facilities are clearly identified by signs which indicate their location and provide clear directions for their use;
10. A plumbed emergency eyewash or shower facility is full flow tested at least once per month, for a sufficient length of time to completely flush the branch of the water line supplying the eyewash;
11. Workers required to use emergency eyewash and shower facilities are adequately trained in their location and proper use;
12. An emergency eyewash or shower facility and the piping from the supply are protected against freezing; and
13. A valve which activates an emergency eyewash or shower facility is designed so that, once activated, the flow of water or flushing solution will continue without requiring use of the operator's hands (*OHS Reg.*, Secs. 5.85 to 5.96).

MANITOBA

1. Employer must provide emergency washing facilities at a workplace where hazardous, irritating, or corrosive substances are used;
2. Employer must assess risk of exposure to hazardous, irritating, or corrosive substances in the workplace in consultation with the JHSC, safety rep, or workers if there is no JHSC or safety rep at the workplace;
3. Employer must provide the number and type of emergency washing equipment sufficient to address the risk of

- exposure to hazardous, irritating, or corrosive substances as determined by the above risk assessment;
4. Employer must ensure that the emergency washing equipment provided at the workplace meets the requirements and is installed, tested, and maintained in accordance with (a) ANSI/ISEA Z358.1-2014, *American National Standard for Emergency Eyewash and Shower Equipment*; and (b) the equipment manufacturer's specifications;
 5. Employer must ensure that: (a) the emergency washing equipment is located in the workplace and clearly identified in accordance with the requirements of ANSI/ISEA Z358.1-2014; and (b) unimpeded access to the equipment is provided;
 6. Employer must ensure that a worker who may be required to use emergency washing equipment is trained in the use of the equipment in accordance with the requirements of (a) ANSI/ISEA Z358.1-2014; and (b) the equipment manufacturer's specifications;
 7. In addition to the required emergency washing equipment, employer **may** provide a personal eyewash unit to a worker to immediately flush an eye injury; and
 8. If a worker has used a personal eyewash unit to flush an eye injury, an employer must ensure that the worker immediately uses the emergency washing equipment provided in the workplace (*WSH Reg*, Secs. 21.2 to 21.5).

NEW BRUNSWICK

Employer must:

1. Provide emergency showers or eyewash fountains in the area where contamination may occur if an employee's skin or eyes may be exposed to contamination from materials at a place of employment; and
2. Ensure that that the emergency shower or eyewash fountain meets ANSI/ISEA Z358.1-2009, or a standard

offering equivalent or better protection (*OHS Gen Reg*, Sec. 11).

NEWFOUNDLAND

Employer must ensure that:

1. Appropriate emergency washing facilities are provided in a work area where a worker's eyes or skin may be exposed to harmful or corrosive materials or other materials which may burn or irritate;
2. Only a potable water supply is used in a plumbed emergency eyewash facility and that only potable water or an isotonic saline flushing solution is used in a portable (non-plumbed) eyewash unit;
3. Access to emergency eyewash and shower facilities isn't blocked by material or equipment; and
4. Selection of emergency washing facilities is based upon an assessment of the risks present in the workplace (*OHS Regs*, Sec. 63).

NOVA SCOTIA

1. If a person's skin or eyes may be acutely affected by an exposure to a caustic, acidic, or other hazardous substance, employer must provide one of the following in the work area where the exposure may occur: (a) an emergency shower; (b) an eye wash fountain; (c) enough flushing fluid to last at least 15 minutes; and (d) other equipment sufficient for removal of the substance; and
2. An eye wash or shower equipment must: (a) meet the latest version of ANSI/ISEA Z358.1; (b) be installed, operated, inspected, and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions; (c) be located so that there's an unobstructed path to the equipment and the user can access the equipment within 10 seconds of

exposure; (d) provide sufficient flushing fluid at sufficient pressure for the greater of: (i) 15 minutes, and (ii) the time indicated on the SDS sheet; and (e) have the instructions for use and an expiration date permanently affixed to the unit (*Occ Safety Gen Regs*, Sec. 23).

ONTARIO

1. Where a worker is required to work with, or is likely to be exposed to, a hazardous biological or chemical agent that could cause injury to the eye or skin, an employer must provide as many of the following as needed for adequate emergency treatment: (a) Eye wash facilities; (b) Emergency showers; (c) Antidotes, flushing fluids or washes; and
2. The above emergency equipment or treatments must: (a) be clearly marked with a sign or label; (b) be located or installed in a conspicuous place near where the hazardous biological or chemical agent is kept or used; (c) be readily accessible to workers; and (d) have instructions for its use displayed on the equipment or treatment or as near to it as is practical (*OHS Ind. Ests. Reg*, Sec. 124)

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Employer must ensure that:

1. Appropriate emergency washing facilities are provided in a work area where a worker's eyes or skin may be exposed to harmful or corrosive materials or other materials which may burn or irritate the worker's eyes or skin;
2. Only a potable water supply is used in a plumbed emergency eyewash facility and that only potable water or an isotonic saline flushing solution is used in a potable (non-plumbed) eyewash unit;

3. Access to emergency eyewash and shower facilities isn't blocked by material or equipment;
4. Selection of emergency washing facilities is based on an assessment of risks present in the workplace; and
5. Where the risk assessment finds that an emergency shower or eyewash fountain is required, the shower or fountain is installed, tested, and maintained in accordance with ANSI Z358.1-14 (*OHS Act Gen Regs*, Sec. 2.9).

QUÉBEC

1. Emergency showers and eye wash fountains must be put at the disposal of workers: (a) when a corrosive substance or other dangerous substance is likely to rapidly cause serious or irreversible damage to the skin or eyes; (b) when a toxic substance is likely to be rapidly absorbed by the skin or the eyes and cause them to have serious irritations;
2. In other cases, equipment for rinsing eyes and washing skin, such as showers, portable showers, eye wash fountains, or any other type of plumbing must be put at the disposal of workers, according to the nature of the dangers to which they are exposed and such equipment must be located near the work station of the exposed workers;
3. Emergency showers and eye wash fountains referred to in subsection (1) above must be clearly identified, easily accessible, located within the immediate vicinity of exposed workers and supplied with warm water; and
4. Water from showers supplied by a drinking water network as well as water supplying portable showers must be regularly changed to ensure its safety (*OHS Reg*, Secs. 75 + 76).

SASKATCHEWAN

Employer or contractor must:

1. Provide and maintain an approved and readily accessible means of bathing or showering the worker in lukewarm water if there may be a risk of substantial contamination of the worker or the worker's clothing from corrosive or other harmful substances; and
2. Provide, at readily accessible locations, approved equipment to flush the eyes of the worker with lukewarm water or another appropriate liquid if there may be a risk to the eyes of a worker from corrosive or other harmful substances (*OHS Regs*, Secs. 2-11 + 2.12).

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES & NUNAVUT

Employer must:

1. Provide and maintain an approved and readily accessible means of bathing or showering the worker in lukewarm water if there's a risk of substantial contamination of the worker or the worker's clothing from corrosive or other harmful or hazardous substances; and
2. Provide, at readily accessible locations, approved equipment to flush the eyes of the worker with lukewarm water or another appropriate liquid if there's a risk to the eyes of a worker from corrosive or other hazardous substances (*OHS Regs*, Secs. 319 + 320).

YUKON

Emergency showers and eye fountains must be installed in the immediate surroundings if workers regularly or frequently engage in the handling and decanting of corrosive substances (*Occup Health Regs*, Sec. 16(4)).