Occupational skin disorders are a significant cause of impairment and disability. Through the combined effort of management and workers, occupational skin disorders can be prevented. Following are safety guidelines for the prevention of dermatitis on the job site and at home:

- **Most occupational dermatitis is caused** from contact with primary irritant chemicals. Primary irritants alter the chemistry of the skin and destroy its protection abilities. This reaction can cause tissue destruction (chemical burn), or inflammation (dermatitis), depending on the strength of the chemical and the duration of exposure. Read all MSDS for the chemicals that are to be used, before proceeding with handling and disposal.

- **Primary irritants** act directly on the skin. Primary irritants include: Soaps, alkalis, detergents, most organic solvents, alcohol, formaldehyde, phenol, heavy metal salts, inorganic acids, anhydrides, alkanes such as calcium oxide, nitrates, chlorine, bromine, ammonia, hydrogen peroxide, tar, aromatic and aliphatic hydrocarbons, formic and oxalic acids, petroleum products, coal tar based materials, arsenic, and some chlorinated hydrocarbons.

- **Chemicals** that cause skin sensitization are poison ivy, epoxy, formaldehyde, ammonia, germicidal agents, nickel compounds, mercury compounds, cobalt compounds, and coal tars. Some compounds, such as turpentine and chronic acid, cause both primary irritation and sensitization.

- **Workers** can also become sensitized by **latex** in rubber gloves. Latex allergies can develop, and in some cases, create serious health problems.

**Prevention and Control**: Preventing skin disorders can increase work productivity, decrease worker’s compensation cost, and decrease lost time. Employers must provide adequate washing facilities, good cleansing materials, and training on safe hygiene practices.

- **Washbasins should be well designed, conveniently located, and kept clean.** Inconveniently located washbasins invite undesirable practices, as washing with easily available solvents, mineral oils, or industrial detergents, all of which can be harmful to the skin.

- **Employees should wash** their hands before eating, drinking, smoking, using chewing tobacco, and using the restroom. Workers must also wash their hands before leaving the worksite. Frequent hand washing will also reduce the risk of chemicals being accidentally ingested.

- **Choose a soap** that has the following characteristics: (1) Contains industrial soil effectively and effectively. (2) Should not dehydrate or irritate the skin under normal applications. (3) Should flow easily through dispensers. (4) Should provide protection against microbial contamination.

- **Where washing facilities** are not available, waterless cleaners can be used. Use a moisturizing hand lotion after applying waterless cleansers.

- **Barrier creams** can be used to protect against wet materials and dry materials. Consider the materials that the workers will be exposed to.

**Personal Protective Equipment**: Protective clothing acts as a barrier between the skin and irritating chemicals. Personal protective equipment used to control dermatitis are aprons, face shields, gloves, hair covers, and chemical-resistant coveralls. Workers’ families can develop contact dermatitis from contact with clothing worn home from work. **Clothing contaminated with chemicals** should always be thoroughly laundered before they are worn again.

- **Manufacturers provide** a large selection of protective garments made of rubber, plastic film, leather, cotton, or synthetic fiber that are designed for specific purposes. When selecting PPE it must be made from material that will provide the maximum protection and will not break down under chemical contact. Refer to manufacturer’s guidelines when selecting material.

- **OSHA has requirements** for protective clothing. Employers must follow these requirements when selecting and using personal protective equipment (PPE). The OSHA standard requires that a hazard assessment is completed and documented before employees are required to use PPE. A hazard assessment identifies all workplace hazards and the types of PPE that are needed. The standard requires that employees be effectively trained on use of any required PPE.

**Conclusion**: Occupational skin disorders can be identified and prevented. Follow these safety guidelines for preventing dermatitis at work, or at home.

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**Work Site Review**

Work-Site Hazards and Safety Suggestions: __________________________________________________________________________________________

Personnel Safety Violations: __________________________________________________________________________________________

Material Safety Data Sheets Reviewed: __________________________________________________________________________________________

**Employee Signatures:**

(My signature attests and verifies my understanding of and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness.)

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Foreman/Supervisor’s Signature: __________________________________________________________________________________________

These guidelines do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations. The first aid information provided is intended to be general in nature and is based upon the “best available” guidelines. No results either general or specific are represented or guaranteed.

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