

# INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS



“THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT AT WORK, BUT  
I’M ALRIGHT”...AN INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT  
VICTIM’S PERSPECTIVE!



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## **“THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT AT WORK, BUT I’M ALRIGHT” ...AN INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT VICTIM’S PERSPECTIVE!**

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No one plans on being involved in an industrial accident, it just happens. In Al’s case, it was simply a matter of being in the wrong place at the right time. While returning to his work area from the tool crib, a drum of caustic material slipped off of a fork lift. The drum hit the side of an inventory rack and split open. Al was splashed across his left side, soaking his clothing from head to toe. A significant amount of the hazardous material struck his exposed face and hands.

In the sometimes matter-of-fact world of OSHA and ANSI requirements, this would be a cut and dried situation. There should be a combination eye/face wash and drench shower within ten seconds of the location of the accident, on the same level, without obstacles in the pathway, etc. Most significant sized operations have a solid handle on the specifics of the regulatory requirements for dealing with Al’s incident. But, what about the most important part of all... what about Al? What about his state of mind and psychological condition from the instant the splash contacted him forward? ANSI doesn’t mandate compassion and care about the comfort and well-being of the victim from the first moment on. That’s the unwritten responsibility of Al’s employer and their associated managers.

The first step in attending to the personal needs of accident victims is recognizing those needs. Most of the immediate needs are common-sense. Accident victims have suffered a trauma, which brings the possibility of pain, nervous agitation and accompanying shock, along with possible embarrassment over the accident occurring at all. So, proper planning becomes a function of answering those needs and alleviating the concerns as much as possible. Selection of the proper equipment, reasonable placement and training will go a long way toward mitigating victim concerns. Having the proper procedures in place to provide immediate first aid assistance, while also reassuring and comforting the victim is equally critical. And, as with all areas of safety and emergency response, training on the risks and dangers present, as well as the emergency response equipment available – including locations and use instructions - is an obvious necessity.

Now, let’s consider some specific needs:

**EASILY-ACCESSED, OPERATIONAL EQUIPMENT IS A GIVEN.** The requirement for quality emergency showers and eyewashes is fundamental to a quality response. Emergency equipment that doesn’t operate properly, hasn’t been adequately maintained or does not provide the required capabilities will exacerbate the victim’s anxiety. High-quality emergency equipment, in the proper numbers and locations should be assumed. This is not a place to skimp! Features like high visibility signage, easy-to-operate actuation, flow controls to assure smooth operation and diffused spray eyewash and shower heads are good investments. Remember, the products that you choose can have an impact on the degree of anxiety experienced by accident victims.

**PRIVACY DURING USE.** Imagine an injured employee needing to disrobe under an emergency shower flow and stand there for the required 15-minute use cycle. While it has to be done and few would hesitate, consider the state-of-mind of that employee a few minutes into the cycle. Consider that the victim is probably embarrassed that the accident even occurred anyway – if you add in the embarrassment of an exposed fifteen-minute shower, you get some sense of their state-of-mind. There are a number of products on the market that address the privacy needs of victims using emergency equipment. Figure #1 (shown on next page) shows a plumbed-in drench shower with a privacy curtain attached.



This low cost option provides a modicum of privacy, making shower use far less stressful.

Many specifiers are moving toward the ultimate in visibility and privacy by specifying enclosed emergency equipment products. An example of these products is shown in Figures #2. These emergency shower and eyewash booths offer superior visibility to accident victims, as well as privacy during use. And, they provide the added benefit of a turn-key response system that is tailored to each user's specific needs. In larger sizes, they also can provide space inside for safety personnel to assist the victim during use.



Figure #2

**ENCOURAGE FULL-CYCLE USE.** In addition to providing operable emergency equipment, with victim-oriented features that offer as much comfort and privacy as possible, it is imperative that your emergency response program encourage full-cycle use. ANSI Z358.1-2009 stipulates that emergency showers and eyewashes should be used for a full 15-minute drench or irrigation cycle in all instances. Adhering to the required timeframe assures that all hazardous materials have been adequately flushed from the body, mitigating any potential further injury. In many geographic areas, municipally supplied water can become cold enough to make a 15-minute use cycle a torture test, let alone a comforting experience. Likewise, there are geographic areas and hot ambient temperature industrial processes that can heat municipal water to dangerously warm levels, again possibly resulting in a shortened use cycle. It is imperative that emergency response assets reconcile these situations with either tempering or reverse tempering to assure that the water used is within a safe and

comfortable range. Per the ANSI Z358.1 standard, the range should be between 60°F and below 100°F for both emergency showers and eye/face washes.

**A DISCIPLINED MAINTENANCE PROGRAM MEANS NO EMBARRASSING SURPRISES.** Consider your emergency response maintenance and use procedures: ANSI requires that all emergency showers and eyewashes should be physically tested every week and thoroughly inspected every year. This not only assures proper operation, but it also flushes out debris in the system.

It is also important that your operating procedures include the specific responsibilities of all of those people involved in emergency response, including otherwise not involved employees who could be potential victims. Written procedures assure that everyone knows his or her role and also provides valuable documentation in the event of a serious accident.

**TRAIN AND DRILL THE TEAM.** Once the equipment and safety/emergency procedures are in place, it's time to make sure that response is second nature to everyone. One would hope that Al knew exactly where to go for emergency aid and what to do once he got there. And, likewise, the other people involved in assisting with the response also swung into action automatically.

Training employees and management regarding the locations of your emergency equipment and how to operate the various response assets completes your overall preparation and response plan. You can't over-train personnel on using emergency equipment. These days "war gaming" is



Figure #1



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a popular way of both testing preparedness and training for reflexive response. The old grammar school "fire drill" approach will give you a realistic look at what you can expect if and when the real thing occurs.

As the title of this article implies, providing a supportive environment that encourages understanding of the risks and the procedures to follow in the event of an accident will, hopefully, minimize pain and suffering of employees and their families. There is more at stake than a deviation from a regulation. Every incident involves a very anxious human being.

For more information on the full range of emergency shower and eye/face wash products visit [www.hawesco.com](http://www.hawesco.com).

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