



Facility Safety

## The Right Eyewash Stations for Your Workspace

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### What You Need to Know

Eye injuries result in more than \$300 million a year in losses.

Knowing OSHA and ANSI regulations is key.

After you install your station, commit to a maintenance schedule.

Whether you run a small shop or manage safety for a large company, here are the essentials to start thinking about eyewash stations.

As a result of eye injuries, \$300 million is spent every year in lost production time, medical expenses and workers' compensation. So there is no question that the appropriate eyewash equipment and eye-safety practices should be a top priority for any manufacturing company. Questions do arise, however, when it comes to choosing the equipment that best fits your company's space, work environment and employees.

To alleviate some of that inevitable confusion, here are some of the key factors companies should consider when purchasing and installing eyewash equipment.

### Assess the Situation

"A company should first conduct a risk, or hazard, assessment to properly identify all hazards to which their employees may be exposed," says Keith Flamich, marketing manager at Guardian Equipment, a leading industry resource for emergency eyewash needs. Following that assessment, companies should consider a number of important variables to determine whether a permanent or portable eyewash station is the best solution, including:

- Access to plumbed water supply
- Access to tepid water
- Freeze resistance
- Corrosion resistance

## Review Eyewash Station Regulations

With the potential hazards identified and the worksite capabilities understood, companies should educate themselves on the certifications and regulations for eyewash stations. "The equipment they intend to use should be properly certified to meet standards for emergency eyewash and shower equipment," says Flamich.

These two sets of standards are particularly important:

- **Governmental:**

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide eye and face protection whenever necessary to protect against chemical, environmental, radiological or mechanical irritants and hazards. These can vary by state and industry, so it's key to familiarize yourself with the latest **OSHA** regulations applicable to the areas where you operate.

- **Third Party:**

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) oversees ANSI/ISEA Z87.1, which assesses the performance, design and labeling of eye- and face-safety products, and ANSI/ISEA Z358.1, which is widely considered to be the industry standard for the requirements and inspection protocol of commercial eyewash safety equipment. Here are three keys of **ANSI/ISEA Z87.1**:

- While the standard is considered voluntary, OSHA often uses it as a guide for inspections.
- Not complying with the ANSI/ISEA standard may result in penalties ranging from fines to plant shutdowns.
- Areas of focus include plumbed and self-contained eyewash equipment, as well as portable eye- and face-wash units.

## Eyewash Stations: When and Why to Go Portable

For some companies, portable eyewash stations can be a safe and effective alternative to plumbed stations, Flamich says, noting that proper equipment certification remains paramount. Here are situations where a portable eyewash station may be the right solution:

- There's no access to plumbed water supply.
- Worksite has hazard areas that lack access to tepid water and are subject to low temperatures.
- Flexibility is required in terms of placement.

## Cover Your Eyes: The Importance of Protective Lenses

While a certified, high-quality eyewash station is of utmost importance, it must be understood that the station should not be treated as a substitute for protective eyewear. Protective goggles should be worn at all times when handling hazardous materials—serving as your primary line of defense and protection. The eyewash station should act as your emergency backup plan. For more information on the rules, regulations and guidelines of protective clothing and eyewear, visit [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov).

### Eyewash Station Maintenance

Keeping a close eye on the condition of your equipment is critical to an optimal and effective eyewash station, according to Flamich, who says these points are most important when it comes to maintenance:

- Plumbed eyewash stations must be activated weekly to verify proper operation and available flushing fluid.
- Portable eyewash stations must be inspected weekly to assess whether flushing fluid requires changing.
- Annual inspections are required to verify that the eyewash stations are in the appropriate location, properly identified and delivering the correct flushing-fluid flow pattern.

### Best Practices

With the right equipment in place, Flamich recommends companies keep the following in mind:

- Eyewash equipment is not a substitute for personal protective equipment (PPE)—protective clothing and eye and face wear—or for the safe handling of hazardous materials.
- ANSI Z358.1 requires emergency eyewash equipment to be installed within 10 seconds (or 55 feet) from a hazard, but installing it immediately next to the hazard is ideal.
- Wastewater should be disposed of properly and never introduced into a sanitary sewer.
- Installing an alarm near the equipment to alert personnel and request assistance can help mitigate the severity of an accident or injury.

*When was the last time you activated your eyewash station?*