TOOLBOXTALK

CONCRETE & CEMENT BURNS



A serious cement burn can develop before you realize you are being burned. Wet cement may stay against the skin for minutes or hours without causing enough pain to make a worker stop. By the time the burning is obvious, significant skin damage may already have occurred. OSHA warns that cement burns can cause blisters, dead tissue, permanent scarring, and in severe cases damage extending deeper into the body.

WET CEMENT CAN BURN YOUR SKIN

Cement becomes highly alkaline when mixed with water. That means wet concrete, mortar, grout, and many cementitious repair materials can chemically burn the skin. Wet cement is also abrasive and pulls moisture from the skin. Repeated exposure can cause dermatitis, and some workers can develop an allergic reaction to chromium compounds found in Portland cement.

The greatest danger is often material that gets trapped and remains against the body:

- Inside boots
- Inside gloves or sleeves
- Under wet clothing
- Around knees while kneeling
- Under watches, rings, or jewelry

This is especially important during concrete restoration. A small amount of repair mortar or slurry inside a glove or boot can remain against the skin while you continue working. OSHA has investigated workers who suffered serious second- and third-degree burns after wet cement remained inside their boots.

DO NOT WAIT FOR IT TO HURT

If wet cement gets inside your boots, gloves, or clothing, stop what you are doing. Remove the contaminated item and wash the exposed skin promptly with clean water and appropriate soap. Do not simply wipe the material off and keep working. OSHA specifically warns that workers cannot rely on pain or discomfort to tell them when a cement burn is developing.

Prevent the contact in the first place. Wear appropriate alkali-resistant gloves, waterproof boots, protective clothing, and eye protection for the task. Keep cement from entering the top of boots or gloves. Use waterproof kneepads or another protective surface when kneeling could place your skin in contact with wet cement.

Report suspected cement burns. Burns can continue to worsen even after the cement has been removed, and OSHA recommends prompt medical evaluation for a cement burn.

DO

- Keep wet cement off your skin.
- Wear alkali-resistant gloves and waterproof boots.
- Remove contaminated clothing immediately.
- Wash exposed skin promptly.
- Check boots and gloves for contamination.

DON'T

- Wait for pain before reacting.
- Work in contaminated clothing or boots.
- Kneel directly in wet cement.
- Trap cement underneath jewelry.
- Ignore redness, blisters, or skin damage.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why can a cement burn become serious before you notice it?

   a) Burns can develop before pain starts

2. Where can wet cement become trapped against your skin?

   a) Boots, gloves, clothing, knees, jewelry

3. What should you do if wet cement gets inside your boot or clothing?

   a) Stop; remove contamination; wash immediately

References: OSHA, *Preventing Skin Problems from Working with Portland Cement;* OSHA, *Concrete and Concrete Products – Controlling Hazards;* CPWR, *Toolbox Talk: Wet Concrete.*

Talk Given By:	Date:
Company Name:	Location:
Printed Name	Signature

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace and workers have rights. OSHA can help answer questions or concerns from employers and workers. OSHA's On-site Consultation Program offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses, with priority given to high-hazard worksites. For more information, contact your regional or area OSHA office, call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), or visit www.osha.gov.

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