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Burn Hazards and Injury Prevention

Burn injuries are common both at home and in the workplace. The American Burn Association states that there are over 40,000 hospitalizations each year due to burns.

There are a few distinct types of burn injuries.

Types of Burns:

Thermal - Thermal burns are what most people think of first when burns are mentioned. These burns occur due to contact with a hot surface, fire, hot liquids, or an explosion.

Sunburn could be considered a separate type of burn, but we will consider it a thermal burn as well.

Chemical - Chemical burns result from skin or eye contact with a strong acid, corrosive, caustic, or alkaloid. Many of the chemicals used in different processes at many job sites can result in a chemical burn injury.

Some common household products can also produce severe chemical burns if not handled correctly.

Electrical Burns - Electrical burns occur where an electrical current has passed through the body. When the current travels through the body the tissue gives it resistance which results in burns. These burns can be both inside and outside of the body. Usually where the burns are on the outside of the body will tell where the electrical current entered and exited the body.

Burn Prevention:

Thermal - The best way to reduce your chances of suffering from a thermal burn is to eliminate the source of the heat if possible. If there are pipes or other objects that heat up to dangerous temperatures, then it is important to place guards or barriers on them to protect individuals from being burned.

The last line of defense would be to use proper PPE that will protect you from being burned by a hot object or material.

Chemical - Eliminate the use of dangerous chemicals whenever possible. Substitute a chemical that burns the skin quickly with one that does not burn as easily. Block areas or processes that have the chance to

expose individuals to hazardous chemicals. Have emergency showers or eyewash stations available for immediate use if exposed to a chemical.

Electrical - Safe work practices need to be followed to work safely around electricity. Locate and stay away from both underground and overhead powerlines. Inspect all tools for defects in insulation as well as missing ground prongs. Properly repair or discard any compromised cords. Do not operate electrical tools in moist or wet environments.

Always properly lock and tag out equipment before performing your work on them. Try to turn the equipment on to ensure no power is still being given to it. The last line of defense is to wear PPE that protects you from electrical current.

Summary:

Know the sources of burns both at work and at home.

Eliminate as many sources as possible before turning to engineering control or PPE to protect yourself from these hazards.

Always take the necessary time to mitigate burn hazards on the job.