

# CHEMICAL SAFETY



## Basic Crafts Workers Compensation Trust

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## CHEMICALS AND YOU

In order for a chemical to have any effect on you, you have to come in contact with it in either its solid, liquid or gas form. This is because there are four "routes of entry" or paths a chemical can take.

### INHALATION (BREATHING)

The air we breathe is a mixture of chemical gasses, only about 17% of which is oxygen. It's the balance of the remaining 83% that we take for granted. If you notice that your eyes, nose or mouth is irritated, or you experience difficulty breathing, a chemical gas may be present. If this is the case, get out, report to

your supervisor and then make sure to use the proper PPE before returning to the task.

### ABSORPTION (THROUGH YOUR SKIN)

The skin may be an effective barrier to most chemicals, but it can be penetrated. Damage to the skin from cuts, scrapes, cracking, dryness or other conditions makes entry through the skin even easier. Some chemicals can damage the skin on contact and others pass through the skin and into your bloodstream.

Chemical solvents such as toluene, gasoline and mineral spirits are absorbed easily through your skin. There are two easy steps which will help prevent absorption – wearing chemical resistant-gloves and washing off any chemical that contacts the skin as soon as possible. When you're washing, make sure you use a product designed for washing skin - don't use a nasty chemical like paint thinner!

### INGESTION (SWALLOWING)

Good hygiene on the job ought to prevent you inadvertently contaminating your lunch (more common than you think!), thereby ingesting whatever chemicals you're using on the job: wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking, especially when you have been using chemicals.

### INJECTION

Like the shot you get from your doctor when you're ill, chemicals can be accidentally injected into your body. If you work around high-pressure equipment of any kind like compressed air, grease guns, hydraulic lines, the potential exists for this kind of accident. Be extra cautious around any kind of pressurized spray equipment or high pressure lines and never use compressed air to clean off your hands, arms or clothing.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Name several chemicals that we use onsite.
- For each of the chemicals just listed, name route of exposure for each:
  - Inhalation (Breathing)
  - Absorption (Through the Skin)
  - Ingestion (Swallowing)
  - Injection
- What's the simple way to avoid ingesting chemicals?