

Corrosives Are Hazardous Materials

Handout

Several different types of substances can be corrosive.

- Many acids are corrosives—they are often used for cleaning solutions and in the manufacture of textiles, fertilizers, and explosives.
- Alkalines (also called bases or caustics) are also corrosive and are widely used in cleaning agents, fertilizers, and pharmaceutical products.
- Some oxidizers, like fluorine and chlorine, have corrosive properties.
- Corrosives may react violently when they contact other substances—like water.

Corrosives are substances that can destroy other materials on contact.

- They can eat through skin, clothing—sometimes even metal.
- Breathing corrosive mist can cause nose, mouth, and throat irritation, and large amounts can cause bronchitis or severe lung damage.
- Swallowing corrosives can severely damage the throat or stomach—or even cause death.
- Bases are particularly dangerous causes of eye damage or even blindness.
- Skin exposure can produce irritation like contact dermatitis, burns, or blisters.

Using proper personal protective equipment (PPE) is vital when working around corrosives.

- Chemical-resistant safety goggles are necessary and full face shields as well.
- Body protection includes rubber gloves, aprons, and often, full-body suits plus safety shoes.
- Respiratory protection may be needed as well.

Always read the safety data sheet (SDS) to know the proper type of protection.

- Items shipped to your workplace will be marked by the Department of Transportation (DOT) shipping label showing a corrosive dripping on, and eating away at, skin and metal.
- Always follow safety procedures.
- Make sure there is adequate ventilation.
- Keep cigarettes, food, and drinks out of the work area.
- Wash thoroughly after using corrosives.

Be prepared for any emergency—including a spill or exposure.

- If you haven't had special training, don't try to clean up a spill yourself.
—Call in the workers who have been trained.
- Follow the first-aid instructions on the SDS right away.
—For skin contact, remove contaminated clothing and wash thoroughly.
—For eye contact, flush with water for at least 15 minutes.
—For inhaling vapors, get to fresh air immediately.
- In addition, always get prompt medical attention.

Corrosives are useful substances—but they can be deadly unless you follow the rules!