



Infrastructure Projects Southern Toolbox Talk

WORKING WITH CONCRETE

12 January 2016

Wet concrete is dangerous!

In IP Southern, an individual was kneeling on a concrete slab whilst carrying out concrete finishing works. Due to heavy rainfall, concrete run-off was washed onto the area where he was working. As the operative was not wearing waterproof trousers, his clothes became contaminated with the concrete slurry.

Some hours after leaving site, the operative began to suffer significant discomfort to both knees. Upon attending hospital it was confirmed he has suffered concrete alkali burns.

Assess the risk...

Those tasks where concrete will be used must be identified and a risk assessment carried out. If possible do not use concrete or reduce the amount to be used. Plans for contact with concrete should be minimised. Individuals should also be checked for any existing skin or allergy problems.

So...what can you do to stop concrete burns?

Always wear the right PPE for any task involving wet concrete:

- **Gloves** should be waterproof and suitable for use with high alkaline substances (they should be marked with EN374:2003). They should be long and/or tight fitting at the end to prevent concrete being trapped between the glove and the skin
- **Footwear** such as wellington boots should be used. If they leak or get split change them immediately
- **Waterproof trousers** must be worn over the top of boots and not tucked in. This stops the concrete getting into them
- Use **knee pads or a waterproof mat** if you have to kneel for finishing
- Ensure there is access to **good washing facilities** and any concrete on the skin is washed off as soon as possible.

Wet concrete is extremely corrosive and quickly destroys skin surfaces. Typically it causes areas of skin to become red and itchy with some acute attacks causing crusty scales or blisters that ooze fluid.

Wet concrete can cause serious burns



Wet concrete is highly alkaline in nature. A serious burn or ulcer can rapidly develop if it is trapped against the skin. In extreme cases, these burns may need a skin graft or can even cause a limb to be amputated. Wet concrete can also cause chemical burns to the eyes.

What you need to do if get concrete on your skin or in your eyes...

- If it is on your skin – wash it off at once with warm soapy water
- In your eyes – report to a first aider and wash your eyes out with clean water
- If you suffer any symptoms of inflammation or burns then seek further medical advice and assistance