

General Workplace Inspectorate

Promoting Safety and Health in the Workplace

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT ALERT

19 July 2004

Workers Burned by Wet Concrete

Incident

Two construction workers received third-degree burns, requiring skin grafts, after kneeling in wet concrete for up to an hour.

What Happened

The two employees, wearing cotton overalls, knelt on top of wet concrete to level the floor of the sump shown in the photograph. They exposed the skin on their shins and knees to the wet concrete for between 30 minutes to an hour before noticing any discomfort. They then showered and drove one and a half hours for medical assistance. They were hospitalized for eight days.

Preventative Action

Wet concrete is strongly alkaline (pH 12.0 approximately) and prolonged contact with skin will cause chemical burns, which in severe cases has led to amputations of legs and hands. By the time a person has become aware of cement burns



Concrete sump where the workers received their burns

the damage has already been done. The burn can continue to get worse even after the cement has been rinsed off.

Do not expose skin to wet concrete or cement.

Inform employees of the dangers of working with concrete and ensure that employees use heavy grade PVC gloves, boots and protective clothing to protect skin from contact with wet concrete.