Information Sheet – Emergency Safety Shower and Eyewash Testing

Purpose
The purpose of this information sheet is to guide the University on the testing requirements for emergency safety showers and eyewash facilities. The information should be read in conjunction with the Chemical Safety Management and First Aid Management HSW Handbook chapters.

It is important to note: Emergency eyewash, shower, drench hose and combination units are not substitutes for primary personal protective equipment (e.g. face shield, eye protection, protective clothing). Emergency equipment is a contingency arrangement should there be an accidental exposure to a flying particle or chemical splash/spill.

Q1 Which Australian standard outlines the testing requirements for emergency safety showers and eyewash facilities?

AS 4775 (2007) “Emergency eyewash and shower equipment and testing regimes” sets out the requirements for the regular testing of the University’s Emergency Safety Showers and Eyewash facilities.

The standard provides information that assists the University in meeting its WHS obligations and to protect the health and safety of students and employees in the event of an emergency. Regular testing ensures that emergency equipment is operational and the water is clear of contamination in the event that someone has been exposed to hazardous materials which may cause injury to the eyes or body e.g. a chemical spill.

Q2 How often are plumbed emergency showers, eyewash’s and shower/eyewash combination units to be activated?

AS 4775 (2007) “Emergency eyewash and shower equipment and testing regimes” requires weekly activation for a period long enough to verify operation and ensure that clean flushing fluid is available. The intent is to ensure that there is a flushing fluid supply at the outlet of the device, to clear the supply line of any sediment build-up that could prevent fluid from being delivered to the outlet of the device and to minimize microbial contamination due to stagnant water. The Faculty Executive Manager/Faculty Executive Director (delegate) or Head of Branch (delegate) are responsible for ensuring the regular testing and activation of equipment in their area(s) of responsibility in accordance with the First Aid Management HSW Handbook chapter.

In addition to the above, all units are inspected annually under a contractual arrangement managed by Facilities Management (all campuses), to ensure conformance with the annual testing requirements of AS 4775 (2007). A tag is permanently attached to each shower unit, and the test is marked following the successful completion of the inspection.

Q3 Can the frequency of the testing of plumbed emergency showers, eyewash’s and shower/eyewash combination units be varied?

Yes. The frequency of the testing can be varied based on a documented risk assessment (consult with your local HSW Team regarding this process).

If varied, the frequency of testing is to be authorised by the The Faculty Executive Manager/Faculty Executive Director (delegate) or Head of Branch (delegate) in consultation with workshop/laboratory technical officers and/or the Supervisor/Person in control of the area.

NOTE: Whatever the frequency of testing, it is essential that a systematic and verifiable testing routine of all safety showers and eyewash stations in your area of responsibility is in place.
Q4 What is to be included during a test of plumbed emergency showers, eyewash’s and shower/eyewash combination units?
In addition to activating the equipment it is recommended that the tester:
- visually inspect the equipment to ensure that there are no broken parts, pipe damage, leakage etc;
- ensure that the water flow is effective and continuous;
- operate the shower for long enough to verify operation and relieve the unit of any rust and other pipe build-up. Flush the unit until the water runs clear;
- ensure that any plumbed and self-contained eyewash unit, remains activated, without the use of the operator’s hands. In accordance with AS 4775 (2007) “Emergency eyewash and shower equipment and testing regimes” the equipment is to deliver flushing fluid to the eyes for a minimum of 15 minutes. Where the fluid supply to plumbed equipment is time-limited, this is to be clearly indicated and quantified by prominent signage adjacent to the equipment. (Noting that a risk assessment is to be conducted if the equipment is time-limited, to ensure that the 15 minute time-frame is sufficient, based on the nature of the hazardous materials at the location.);
- ensure each shower has a highly visible emergency sign;
- ensure that problems identified during the inspection and testing are reported immediately to the Faculty Executive Manager/Faculty Executive Director (delegate) or Head of Branch (delegate) in consultation with the Supervisor/Person in control of the area. The equipment should be tagged out of operation where necessary in accordance with the Tag out and Lock out procedure in the Plant/Equipment safety management Handbook chapter; and
- ensure that there is unobstructed access to the emergency equipment.

It is suggested that activation of the equipment should be done by a workshop/laboratory technical officer/person in control of the area.

Q5 Are testing records for plumbed emergency shower/eyewash unit required?
Keeping records of testing helps demonstrate compliance activities are conducted in accordance with the AS 4775 (2007) “Emergency eyewash and shower equipment and testing regimes”. The person in control of the area should maintain a logbook (or equivalent) of the periodic tests and activation which identifies:
- Item
- Location
- Date tested
- Any issues
- Name of tester

It is suggested that the testing record be located either adjacent to the unit or in a central area where several units are located on the same floor.

Q6 Where there are no drains in some areas, how can the water be managed when testing a plumbed emergency shower/eyewash unit?
Periodic function testing should take into account water and drainage issues associated with location and plumbing restrictions. An emergency shower test sock and water catchment system (e.g. bucket on a trolley, or bin that can then be wheeled to the disposal area) should be used to minimise the creation of water hazards and minimise manual handling.

Q7 Are plumbed emergency shower/eyewash units connected to the building/local area emergency alarm system?
Yes. Each time a plumbed emergency shower/eyewash unit is activated an alarm will activate and alert Campus Security. A Security Officer will be despatched to check on the area.
To prevent unnecessary Security responses to a test, areas are to contact Security Office on ext 35990 prior to the test. This will enable Campus Security to isolate the alarm in Security office prior to activation.

Q8 Where can I find more information on Emergency Safety Shower and Eyewash Testing
If you would like more information about Chemical Safety Management chapter of the HSW Handbook please contact your local HSW contact.