

Staying Safe: Address Burns & Chemical Exposure Risks

from the Lake Charles Memorial Health System



Lake Charles

Memorial Health System

Emergencies and disasters can strike at any time and threaten the health and safety of employees. Whether it's a fire, chemical spill, natural disaster, or a structural failure, it's essential to understand common workplace injuries that occur during emergencies to take proactive measures that can significantly reduce risks to your employees' health.

Lake Charles Memorial Health System experts outline practical strategies for employers to keep their workforce safe during emergencies to avoid a medical emergency.

Address Burns and Chemical Exposure Risks

Emergencies such as fires, chemical spills, or explosions can expose employees to severe burns or hazardous substances. In the case an employee comes in contact with hazardous or unknown substances or skin is irritated or looks to have a burn, seek medical treatment.

The following types of burns could be a medical emergency:

- **Chemical burns:** Some chemicals can cause ongoing injury if not properly washed off. Chemical burns can also take more time to appear, causing more serious injury as time passes.
- **Electrical burns:** Any electrical burn (including a lightning strike) needs to be checked out as soon as possible. This is because electricity can cause burns inside your body that you can't always see on the skin and can impact the way your heart functions.
- **Inhalation burns:** Breathing in any amount of smoke and/or heat related to a fire can cause injury in your airways. This can continue to worsen over time and cause life-threatening breathing difficulties.

How to prevent burns or exposure to hazardous materials:

- **Consider Emergency Showers and Eye Wash Stations:** In environments where chemicals are used, make sure emergency showers and eye wash stations are available and accessible. These can be used to mitigate the impact to the body, if possible, before emergency services are able to transport the individual to a hospital.
- **PPE for Hazardous Work:** Provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) like fire-resistant clothing, gloves, and goggles for employees working with chemicals or in fire-prone areas.
- **Stay Up to Date On Vaccinations:** Follow the CDC recommendation for tetanus vaccines or people across the lifespan, including for wound management. Employees can speak to their doctor to ensure they are up to date to protect themselves from infection.