

ToolBox Talks from the SWPA Safety Committee

Protecting Your Skin, it's a necessity!

What you can do to protect it... don't be the 1 in 4 that have damage.

There are many skin irritants that you may be exposed to on the job.

Many different things may cause skin damage.

The skin can be like a sponge when it contacts something. The skin contains oil glands, hair follicles, and sweat glands. These are like tiny holes. Skin also contains blood vessels, and some chemicals can penetrate the outer layer and enter the blood stream.

Environmental Conditions: cold, heat, sun, and humidity can damage skin or increase the harm of the factors below to increase skin problems.

Worksite Materials: chemicals, lubricants, fuel, etc. **Conditions of Use:** How long the product is on your skin and how often you use it can help determine whether it will cause a skin problem.

- The skin is the single largest organ of the body. The skin, when healthy, protects us from chemical, physical, and biological hazards.
- Skin weighs about 10% of our total body weight and is approximately one-eighth of an inch thick. The skin is made up of two layers, the epidermis (outer layer) and the dermis (inner layer). The outer layer of skin is only 1/250th of an inch thick and is the part of our skin that forms the protective barrier.

Timber harvesters and haulers are susceptible to dermatitis, an inflammation of the skin that can be caused by contact with many different substances, such as organic solvents, equipment fuels, mineral oils, etc. Not to mention sun and humidity.

There are several different types of dermatitis, but most of them result in a rash caused by an allergic reaction to a specific allergen. The rash usually appears on the area your skin came in contact with the substance.

What You Can Do...

1. Read the label on the container of a chemical substance before you use it. Find out whether the substance has the potential to cause irritation and, if so, follow the recommendations for prevention and become familiar with what you do if the chemical substance makes contact with your skin.
2. When using chemical substances, keep your skin covered. Wear long sleeve shirts and use impermeable gloves designed to protect your skin from the specific chemical you will be using. Use barrier creams when necessary for skin protection. Wear a face shield if there is any chance of getting a chemical substance on your face. And always wear safety goggles under your face shield when working with chemical substances.
3. If you get a chemical substance on your skin, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for how to handle it, and report to your supervisor if the contact causes any problems with your skin.

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