



SAFETY INFORMATION SHEET

CEMENTS, CHROMIUM, FERROUS SULFATE AND OTHER REDUCING AGENTS

Why does cement contain chromium?

- The chromium in cement comes from some of the naturally occurring raw materials used in the manufacture of cement.

What does chromium do?

- When cement is mixed with water some of the chromium dissolves (like salt in water) and can cause allergic dermatitis if it comes into contact with your skin.

What does ferrous sulfate or other reducing agents do when added to cement?

- When ferrous sulfate, or other reducing agent, is added to cement it prevents the chromium from dissolving in water thereby removing the risk of allergic dermatitis.

Will reducing agents be added to cement in the UK?

- All UK manufacturers have agreed to add reducing agents to cement from January 2005.
- The manufacturers are currently designing and installing the dosing equipment required to meet this target at all UK cement works.

Do reducing agents make cement safe enough to handle without personal protective equipment (PPE)?

- Reducing agents do not make cement safe to handle without PPE. Cement, when wet, can cause two types of dermatitis, *allergic* dermatitis and *irritant* dermatitis. Reducing agents only protect against allergic dermatitis.
- Irritant dermatitis is much more common than allergic dermatitis. It is caused by caustic chemicals in wet cement that irritate and inflame the skin. These caustic chemicals can also cause severe skin burns. The only way to protect against these risks is to prevent skin contact.
- The same PPE will, therefore, be required for handling wet cement after the introduction of reducing agents as is required now.
- Irrespective of the introduction of reducing agents, correct PPE would ensure people do not suffer allergic dermatitis, irritant dermatitis or burns.
- In light of the current level of dermatitis and burns, employers are urged to review their existing safety precautions and to provide correct PPE.

Where can I find out more?

- Contact: M G Taylor at BCA, 01344 725706, mtaylor@bca.org.uk



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