Health and Safety in Construction - Identifying Information

Health and safety information can be complex and detailed. Across the construction industry workers need to be able to access information quickly and effectively in order to learn and to get the job done.
Two important reading strategies, called skimming and scanning, can help you quickly identify important information.

Skimming is used to get the overall sense of a piece of text.
For example, you would use skimming to quickly get the gist of a health and safety poster. After skimming you might decide that the poster is useful and then read it slowly and in more detail.

Scanning is used for obtaining specific information from a piece of text.
For example, if you needed to find more information about personal protective equipment and your trade.

You will find that you will probably use both reading methods in your everyday life.

Skimming and scanning tips

1. Read the title, subtitles and subheadings to find out what the text is about.
2. Look at any illustrations to give you further information about the topic.
3. Read the first and last sentence of important looking paragraphs.
4. Do not read every word or sentence. Run your eyes over the text, taking in key words.
5. Think about the meaning of the text whilst you are reading. This helps to keep it in your mind.

Kindly contributed by Gill Gallagher g.gallagher@barnsley.ac.uk Barnsley College for Construction NVQ1-2 or any students working at literacy levels E3-L2. Rt/E3.6 skim read title, headings and illustrations to decide if material is of interest. Rt/E3.7 scan texts to locate information Rt/E3.8 obtain specific information through detailed reading. Rt/L1.5 (L2.7) use different reading strategies to find and obtain information.

Task

1. Read through the text using suitable reading strategies.
2. Answer the questions.

Tips: Underline or highlight the key words in the text.
Look up words that you don't understand in a dictionary.

Dangers of working with cement

Introduction

Cement is widely used in construction. Anyone who uses cement (or anything containing cement, such as mortar, plaster and concrete) or is responsible for managing its use should be aware that it presents a hazard to health.

Health effects

Cement can cause ill health mainly by:
_ skin contact;
_ inhalation of dust; and
_ manual handling.

Skin contact

Contact with wet cement can cause both dermatitis and burns.

Dermatitis

Skin affected by dermatitis feels itchy and sore, and looks red, scaly and cracked. Cement is capable of causing dermatitis by two mechanisms - irritancy and allergy.

Irritant dermatitis is caused by the physical properties of cement that irritate the skin mechanically. The fine particles of cement, often mixed with sand or other aggregates to make mortar or concrete, can abrade the skin and cause irritation resulting in dermatitis. With treatment, irritant dermatitis will usually clear up. But if exposure continues over a longer period the condition will get worse and the individual is then more susceptible to allergic dermatitis.

Research has shown that between 5% and 10% of construction workers may be sensitised to cement and that plasterers, concreters and bricklayers are particularly at risk. Once someone has become sensitised to hexavalent chromium, any future exposure may trigger dermatitis.

Some skilled tradesmen have been forced to change their trade because of this. The longer the duration of skin contact with a sensitiser, the more it will penetrate the skin, and the greater the risk of sensitisation will become. Therefore, if cement is left on the skin throughout the working day, rather than being washed off at intervals, the risk of contact sensitization to hexavalent chromium will be increased.

Extracted from the Health and Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk October 2007 http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cis26.pdf

Kindly contributed by Gill Gallagher g.gallagher@barnsley.ac.uk Barnsley College for Construction NVQ1-2 or any students working at literacy levels E3-L2. Rt/E3.6 skim read title, headings and illustrations to decide if material is of interest. Rt/E3.7 scan texts to locate information Rt/E3.8 obtain specific information through detailed reading. Rt/L1.5 (L2.7) use different reading strategies to find and obtain information.

Answer the questions below.

1. What should anyone working with cement be aware of?

_____

2. Name three ways of using cement that can cause health problems.

_____

_____

3. What can skin contact with cement or mortar cause?

_____

4. What are the signs of dermatitis?

_____

5. How does cement damage the skin?

_____

_____

6. Which construction trades are most at risk from using cement or mortar?

_____

_____

7. What have some tradesmen been forced to do?

_____

8. What will increase the risk of sensitization?

_____

_____

Kindly contributed by Gill Gallagher g.gallagher@barnsley.ac.uk Barnsley College for Construction NVQ1-2 or any students working at literacy levels E3-L2. Rt/E3.6 skim read title, headings and illustrations to decide if material is of interest. Rt/E3.7 scan texts to locate information Rt/E3.8 obtain specific information through detailed reading. Rt/L1.5 (L2.7) use different reading strategies to find and obtain information.