POOL SAFETY: CHEMICAL HAZARDS

INTRODUCTION

Whenever someone is maintaining a swimming pool, they are using chemicals to help keep it clean. The chemicals used in pool maintenance are just as dangerous as any other chemical. Unless employees are handling pool chemicals properly, they are exposing themselves to hazards. Following the safe work practices provided in this lesson will help ensure employee safety.

HAZARDS

Employees are exposed to several hazards when they handle pool chemicals, including the following:

- Eye damage
- Skin irritation
- Potential for explosion (when attempting to mix chemicals together)
- Burns
- Lung irritation from chemical fumes

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Employees should wear the following personal protective equipment:

- Safety glasses with side shields, goggles, or face shield
- Chemical resistant gloves
- Chemical resistant apron (optional or when required by employer)

POOL SAFETY: CHEMICAL HAZARDS

SAFE WORK PRACTICES

- Ensure that you are complying with all manufacturer's instructions for storing and handling of all chemicals.
- Do NOT store chemicals on the floor.
- Do NOT store liquid chemicals above dry chemicals. When possible, store these items in separate areas.
- Do NOT store acids and chlorine-based chemicals together. If you have no choice but to place them in the same area, make sure that there is good distance between the products to avoid accidental mixing.
- Ensure that the storage area is well-ventilated.
- Store all chemicals in a cool, dry area.
- Do NOT reuse any chemical containers. An empty container should be disposed of in accordance with all local and federal regulations and laws.
- Make sure that all the labels on chemical containers are clean and can be read.
- Do NOT eat or drink in the storage area.
- Inspect all your PPE for damage. Report any damaged PPE to your supervisor. Do NOT use damaged PPE.
- When opening chemicals, turn your head away for a minute to avoid breathing in the chemical fumes. If you breathe in the fumes and start coughing, get a good distance away from the container and into an area with fresh air.
- Only use one chemical at a time.
- Do NOT mix chemicals. Mixing chemicals could cause an explosive reaction.
- Use one scoop per chemical. Do NOT use the same scoop for all chemicals.
- Do NOT add water to pool chemicals. Only add the chemicals to the pool water.
- Should you have a spill, consult the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for instructions on how to clean up that specific chemical. Report all spills to your supervisor.
- Should any chemicals get into your eyes, flush them with fresh water for 15 minutes. Do NOT rub your eyes; you could damage them. Tell your supervisor that you got chemicals in your eyes.
- Should any chemicals get on your clothes, remove the clothing and flush the affected area with water from a sink or shower. Tell your supervisor that you got chemicals on your clothing.

CONCLUSION

While swimming pool chemicals help keep pools clean for everyone, handling and storing them involves risks. It doesn't matter if it is for a residential or community pool, handling chemicals safely should be the first priority. When employees follow the safe work practices, they will find that they minimize the risks to the public and themselves.