Hand Sanitizer Safety Precautions

The CDC recommends: “Washing hands with soap and water whenever possible because handwashing reduces the amounts of all types of germs and chemicals on hands. If soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can help you avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.” Alcohol based hand sanitizers can deactivate many types of microbes very effectively when used correctly. Hand sanitizers do not replace proper hand washing techniques and will be ineffective if hands are visibly soiled. Users must ensure that they are using a large enough volume and that they are not wiping it off before it has dried. Ideally you should rub it in for at least 30 seconds. If you choose alcohol based sanitizers, which can be available in gel, liquid or aerosol solutions, be aware of where and how you use them. Alcohol based hand sanitizers contain ethyl alcohol, which readily evaporates at room temperature into an ignitable vapor, and is considered a flammable liquid.

According to the World Health Organization: Some hand sanitizers are flammable due to their high alcohol content. Manufacturers recommend you do not use these products near open flames or while smoking. A small amount of sanitizer, if ignited, produces a translucent blue flame and can burn very hot very quickly, which can lead to personal injury or property damage. Liquid hand sanitizer burns hotter compared to the gel. To minimize burns after applying alcohol based sanitizers, allow your hands to dry and the vapors disperse.

Alcohol Hand Sanitizer Safety Precautions

- Do not store next to oxygen or other medical gas outlets, due to the increased risk of vapors igniting. Take precautionary measures against static discharge.
- Do not allow children to use or access hand sanitizer unless properly supervised by an adult.
- Keep containers tightly closed in a dry, cool and well-ventilated place. Care should be taken regarding the securing of tops / lids.
- Spilled hand sanitizer should be cleaned up immediately and all potential ignition sources immediately removed from the area.
- Care should be taken when carrying personal containers/dispensers to avoid spillage onto clothing, bedding, or curtains, and in pockets, bags or vehicles.
- Hand sanitizer products should not be allowed to come in contact with any type of oxidizing agent.
- Consider the risks associated with spillage onto floor coverings. Placing dispensers above carpets is not recommended due to the risk of damage and lifting/warping causing a tripping hazard.

Health Canada does not recommend making your own hand sanitizer, no matter what the recipe is.

While this material is not considered hazardous, SDS’s contains valuable information critical to the safe handling and proper use of the product. A copy of the SDS should be readily accessible.

More Information to Consider:


Health Canada’s requirements for safety, effectiveness and quality of hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers (COVID-19) can be found at: https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/hand-sanitizer.html#tbl1
When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite, we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names, and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose: to inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up-to-date on the information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance, and any follow-up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping, but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.

One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager’s responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks.

Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.

For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf

**About the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association**

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded, membership-based, nonprofit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees in the construction industry throughout the province to reduce the human and financial losses associated with injuries. Registered March 20, 1995, the SCSA is, and has been since inception, committed to injury prevention. Serving almost 10,000 member companies with business offices in both Regina and Saskatoon, the major business units of the association are Advisory Services, Business Development, Corporate Services, Program Services and Training. The mission of the SCSA is constructing safety leadership in Saskatchewan and the vision is to create the safest construction environment in Canada.