

MCAA Toolbox Safety Talks

Chemical Health Hazards

There are health hazards associated with many of the chemicals we use in the mechanical industry. Let's learn a little bit about these chemical health hazards that are specific to the industry.

- While working at the job site, chemicals get into our bodies primarily through inhalation, ingestion (swallowing) and absorption (through the skin or soft tissue membranes).
- The health effects of inhaling some of the chemicals that we are exposed to include lung irritation, lung cancer, lung diseases such as pneumoconiosis and asbestosis, etc. Examples of things we could inhale which could cause adverse health effects include welding fumes, asbestos, lead, etc. To protect you from these hazards, make sure there is good ventilation in your work area and wear a respirator whenever it's required.
- The health effects of ingesting some of the chemicals we are exposed to include liver and kidney cancer, reproductive damage, tumors of the intestines and blood vessels, etc. Examples of things that we could swallow which could result in adverse health effects include lead, pipe degreasers, etc. To protect yourself from these hazards don't eat, drink, smoke or apply lip balm when working around these chemicals. Wash your hands and face carefully before you do any of these things.
- The health effects of absorbing chemicals through the skin include cancer, liver and kidney damage, etc. Examples of chemicals that could be absorbed through the skin include solvents, acids, lubricants, etc. To protect yourself from these hazards, keep the substance off your skin by wearing protective clothing and impermeable gloves.
- To learn about the specific health effects of the chemicals that you are exposed to, read the *Health Hazard* section of the MSDS's for the chemicals in question.