



Use of Germicidal UV Lamps Accident Prevention Alert

The Next Three Seconds Protects Your Life, Your Loved Ones, Your Livelihood®

The N3L3 philosophy:

our approach to protecting workers from fatal and life-changing events.

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Germicidal UV Lamp Hazards

Germicidal lamps are increasingly being used in the healthcare and other industries to help control the spread of SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus causing COVID-19). The UV-C light that is emitted by Germicidal UV lamps can destroy pathogens, including bacteria and viruses. While these lamps may be helpful in disinfecting certain surfaces, the short-wave UV light that is emitted is also known to cause skin and eye damage. Sunburn-like burns can occur if UV-C light contacts your skin. Painful irritation and potential permanent eye damage can result if you look directly at a UV-C light.

Facts

UV-C light rays have twice the potential harmful energy of either UV-A or UV-B rays that we are exposed to on a daily basis from sunlight, significantly increasing the likelihood of eye or skin injury. Injuries can often be similar to those experienced when exposed to a welding arc and have the potential for both short and long term effects. Consult the manufacturer for specific recommendations on eye and skin protection that is designed for the specific wavelength of light emitted.

EVENT:

A healthcare company was utilizing UV lights to assist with disinfection to minimize the spread of the novel coronavirus. A housekeeping employee was working near the process. She accidentally looked directly at a UV light that was being used. The direct eye exposure to the light caused damage to her eyes. The injured worker has a long road to recovery as it is unknown at this time if the effects of the injury will be permanent.

Controls

- Consult the lamp manufacturer's manual for operating procedures.
- Provide training to all employees who may operate or work near the lamp on the manufacturer's procedures.
- Educate employees on the hazards of UV light and what precautions to take when operating the equipment. This would include to never look directly at a UV lamp while it is in use, even at a distance, and to never allow the light to make direct contact with their skin.
- Prevent access to areas where a UV lamp is operating.
- If a lamp is in operation, post a warning sign that high intensity ultraviolet light is being used and that skin and eye protection is required.
- Provide your employees with the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as specified by the manufacturer if they must work near an operating lamp. This should include skin and eye protection and may consist of gloves, long-sleeves, UV-safety goggles, and UV-resistant face shields.
- Ensure service personnel only work on UV lights when the lights are de-energized.