



American Chemical Society

Committee on Chemical Safety
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Lawrence J. Fine, M.D.
Acting Director
National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health
HHH Building, Room 715H
Mail Stop P12
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20201

Dear Dr. Fine:

The American Chemical Society Committee on Chemical Safety (CCS) congratulates you on your appointment as Acting Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health.

The American Chemical Society is a professional society that represents more than 163,000 members of the chemical profession working in industry, academia, and government. As part of its mission, CCS serves as a resource to chemical professionals in providing advice and counsel on the handling of chemicals. After careful study, CCS issued a statement in 1998 basically declaring that contact lenses do not increase risks in working with chemicals, but can actually minimize or prevent injury in many situations. However, the statement is at odds with NIOSH policy, i.e., NIOSH warns in its Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards that contact lenses should not be worn when working with any chemical where "Irrigate immed" or "Irrigate prompt" is noted in the First Aid column for individual chemicals. This notation encompasses almost ALL listed chemicals.

A revision to the NIOSH contact lens policy is currently being worked on under the direction of Dr. David Votaw. His current data include not only the CCS policy, but a recent informal survey in conjunction with the Organization of Resources Counselors, Inc., interviews with experts, and statements by the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Even OSHA indicates that contact lenses do not pose additional hazards to the wearer (see 59 FR 16334-16364).

Revision to the contact lens policy change was given priority by Dr. Linda Rosenstock. The Committee on Chemical Safety will be meeting in August at the national ACS meeting and would like to report on the status of the NIOSH contact lens policy to the Society. Your help in expediting the contact lens policy will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Diane G. Schmidt, Ph.D.
Chair, Committee on Chemical Safety
American Chemical Society
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