



Weekly Safety Tip

Use of a Rescue Inhaler Recordable?



Use of a Rescue Inhaler Recordable?



Occupational Safety and Health Administration

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Standard Interpretations > Determining the recordability of an illness when an employee uses a rescue inhaler following an exposure in the work place.

Standard Number: [1904.5](#) [1904.7](#) March 17, 2021

OSHA requirements are set by statute, standards and regulations. Our interpretation letters explain these requirements and how they apply to particular circumstances, but they cannot create additional employer obligations. This letter constitutes OSHA's interpretation of the requirements discussed.

Mr. Bryan D. LeMoine, 2730 North Ballas Road, Suite 200 P.O. Box 31901 St. Louis, MO 63131-3039

Dear Mr. LeMoine:

... Your letter requests clarification concerning the recordability of an illness when an employee uses a rescue inhaler following exposure to fragrance in the workplace.

Background: In your letter, you state that an **employee with non-occupational asthma and rhinitis has developed a fragrance sensitivity**. This fragrance sensitivity is a symptom of the employee's non-occupational asthma. The employee takes medication on a daily basis to treat the asthma and self-medicates with a rescue inhaler prescribed by his personal physician. Since developing the fragrance sensitivity in June 2018, the employee has reported exposure to fragrance in the workplace, which resulted in symptoms associated with his asthma. The employee, who has been exposed to fragrance both in and out of the workplace, has missed work on one or two occasions after experiencing a more significant reaction to fragrance exposure in the workplace.

Question 1: *Is the employee's use of a rescue inhaler after exposure to fragrances at work a recordable illness or injury* where (1) the employee did not previously experience a recorded injury or illness of the same type (e.g., the employee's respiratory illness is not work-related), (2) the employee is self-medicating due to a non-work related condition (e.g., asthma), and (3) medical treatment was required prior to the June 2018 incident at work for the condition (e.g., asthma)?

Response: OSHA's recordkeeping regulation at 29 CFR 1904.5(a) provides that an employer "must consider an injury or illness to be work-related if an event or exposure in the work environment either caused or contributed to the resulting condition or significantly aggravated a pre-existing injury or illness. Work-relatedness is presumed for injuries and illnesses resulting from events or exposures occurring in the work environment, unless an exception in section 1904.5(b)(2) specifically applies." Under this section, an injury or illness is **presumed work-related if, and only if, an event or exposure in the work environment is a discernible cause of the injury or illness or a significant aggravation to a pre-existing condition.**

The work event or exposure need be only one of the discernable causes; it need not be the sole or predominant cause.

See the settlement agreement between OSHA and the National Association of Manufacturers, 66 Fed. Reg. 66,943 (Dec. 27, 2001).

Section 1904.5(b)(4) states, "A pre-existing injury or illness has been significantly aggravated, for purposes of OSHA injury and illness recordkeeping, when an event or exposure in the work environment results in . . . (iv) Medical treatment in a case where no medical treatment was needed for the injury or illness before the workplace event or exposure, or a change in medical treatment was necessitated by the workplace event or exposure." Section 1904.5(b)(5) provides that an injury or illness is a pre-existing condition if it resulted solely from a non-work-related event or exposure that occurred outside the work environment.

Weekly Safety Share



*Understanding HCS Pictograms
and Chemical Hazards*

Understanding HCS Pictograms and Chemical Hazards.

The **Hazard Communication Standard (HCS)** requires pictograms on labels to alert users of the chemical hazards to which they may be exposed.

Each pictogram consists of a symbol on a white background framed within a red border and represents a distinct hazard(s).

The pictogram on the label is determined by the chemical hazard classification.

HCS Pictograms and Hazards



Health Hazard

Carcinogen
Mutagenicity
Reproductive Toxicity
Respiratory Sensitizer
Target Organ Toxicity
Aspiration Toxicity



Flame

Flammables
Pyrophorics
Self-Heating
Emits Flammable Gas
Self-Reactives
Organic Peroxides



Exclamation Mark

Irritant (skin and eye)
Skin Sensitizer
Acute Toxicity (harmful)
Narcotic Effects
Respiratory Tract Irritant
Hazardous to Ozone Layer (Non-Mandatory)



Gas Cylinder

Gases Under Pressure



Corrosion

Skin Corrosion/ Burns
Eye Damage
Corrosive to Metals



Exploding Bomb

Explosives
Self-Reactives
Organic Peroxides



Flame Over Circle

Oxidizers



Environment (Non-Mandatory)

Aquatic Toxicity



Skull and Crossbones

Acute Toxicity (fatal or toxic)

David A. Varwig, CSP-retired and SCNWO Board Member for





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