

## WORKING SAFELY WITH CONCRETE

Ready mixed concrete is a safe construction material, if safety-conscious work practices and common sense precautions are taken while working with it in both its wet (plastic) and hardened states.

Wet (plastic) concrete is caustic, a product of its alkaline chemical composition. Prolonged contact between wet (plastic) concrete and skin surfaces, eyes and clothing may result in skin irritation or severe burning, often third degree. Any areas of skin exposed or in contact with wet concrete should be washed promptly with a pH neutral soap and clean water. Often, if you feel a burning sensation after contact with wet concrete, you already have chemical burns and should seek medical attention immediately.

When working with hardened concrete, precautions should be taken when sawing, grinding, drilling or breaking. The dust created from these actions can irritate the nose, throat and eyes and may cause choking and difficulty breathing. The dust also may contain high levels of crystalline silica. Repeated and/or prolonged exposure to this dust can lead to silicosis, a disabling, often fatal lung disease. Proper breathing protection should be used.

Taking the necessary precautions and being aware of the potential hazards is vital to your well being and safety. Some common sense precautions when working with concrete should be considered each and every time you use the product:

- Begin each day by wearing clean clothing and conclude the day with a bath or shower.
- Wear waterproof gloves, waterproof footwear (high enough to keep concrete from flowing into them), a long sleeve shirt, full-length pants, and proper eye protection (goggles or safety glasses with side shields).
- If you are finishing concrete, wear waterproof pads to protect your knees and elbows.
- Provide clean water at the jobsite. Wash wet concrete, mortar, cement or cement mixtures from your skin or clothing immediately. The best way to avoid skin irritation is to wash frequently.
- Should concrete get into your eyes, immediately flush your eyes for 15 minutes with clean water. Then consult with a physician or seek medical attention.
- When sawing, drilling or grinding hardened concrete, wet down the work area to keep dust out of the air and wear a suitable dust mask or respirator.
- Avoid dry sweeping. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to clean up the concrete dust.