OSHA® QuickFacts

Laboratory Safety
Autoclaves/Sterilizers

Under OSHA's Personal Protective Equipment standard (29 CFR 1910.132), your employer must assess and identify potential worksite hazards to which you may be exposed while you are doing your job. Employers must also ensure that workers use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Workers should recognize the potential for burns or cuts while handling or sorting hot sterilized items or sharp instruments, and use caution when removing them from autoclaves/sterilizers or from steam lines that service the autoclaves.

Workers should use appropriate hand protection when hands are exposed to hazards such as cuts, lacerations or thermal burns. Using oven mitts for handling hot items, and steel mesh gloves for handling or sorting sharp instruments are examples of appropriate PPE.

Establish good work practices to prevent injuries from occurring:

- Ensure that the autoclave/sterilizer door is closed and locked before beginning the cycle.
- Do not remove items from an autoclave/sterilizer until they have cooled.
- Avoid handling the sharp ends of instruments.
- Use forceps or other tools to remove sharp instruments from baskets and autoclaves.

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For assistance, contact us. We can help. It's confidential.

OSHA® Occupational Safety and Health Administration
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