

Isocyanates

Isocyanates are chemicals used in many construction products, such as paints, glues, and spray polyurethane foams (SPF or spray foam insulation). Breathing in the vapors and mist containing isocyanates can cause asthma. Workers can also develop a rash if these chemicals touch their skin. Some workers become sensitized, which means that exposure to even small amounts of these chemicals can cause an asthma attack or skin rash. Serious reactions can result in lost work days, disability, and even death.

Andrew's Story

Andrew was working on a residential remodeling project applying spray polyurethane foam insulation inside the home. He began to experience shortness of breath and wheezing. Andrew went to see his doctor, and told the doctor that the symptoms started around the time the insulation work began. His doctor told him he had become sensitized to the chemicals in the insulation and could no longer safely work with or around the product because he could have a life-threatening asthma attack.

- ✘ **What could have been done to prevent Andrew from becoming sensitized to the isocyanates in the insulation?**
- ✘ **Do you know anyone who became sick after working with or around these chemicals? How did it affect them?**

Remember This

- Make sure the work area is ventilated and the ventilation equipment is working properly.
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE), including: coveralls, chemical-resistant gloves, and eye protection.
- Wear a supplied-air respirator when spraying inside or an air-purifying respirator with an organic vapor cartridge (OVC) and P100 particulate filter when spraying outside or working nearby.
- Wash your skin immediately with soap and water if the product gets on your skin.
- Wash your hands before eating and drinking and remove protective clothing before taking breaks and going home.
- Clean up your work area and make sure products are properly stored.
- Ask your employer for training. OSHA requires employers to train their employees about the chemicals they will be exposed to, give them safety data sheets, and label the products.

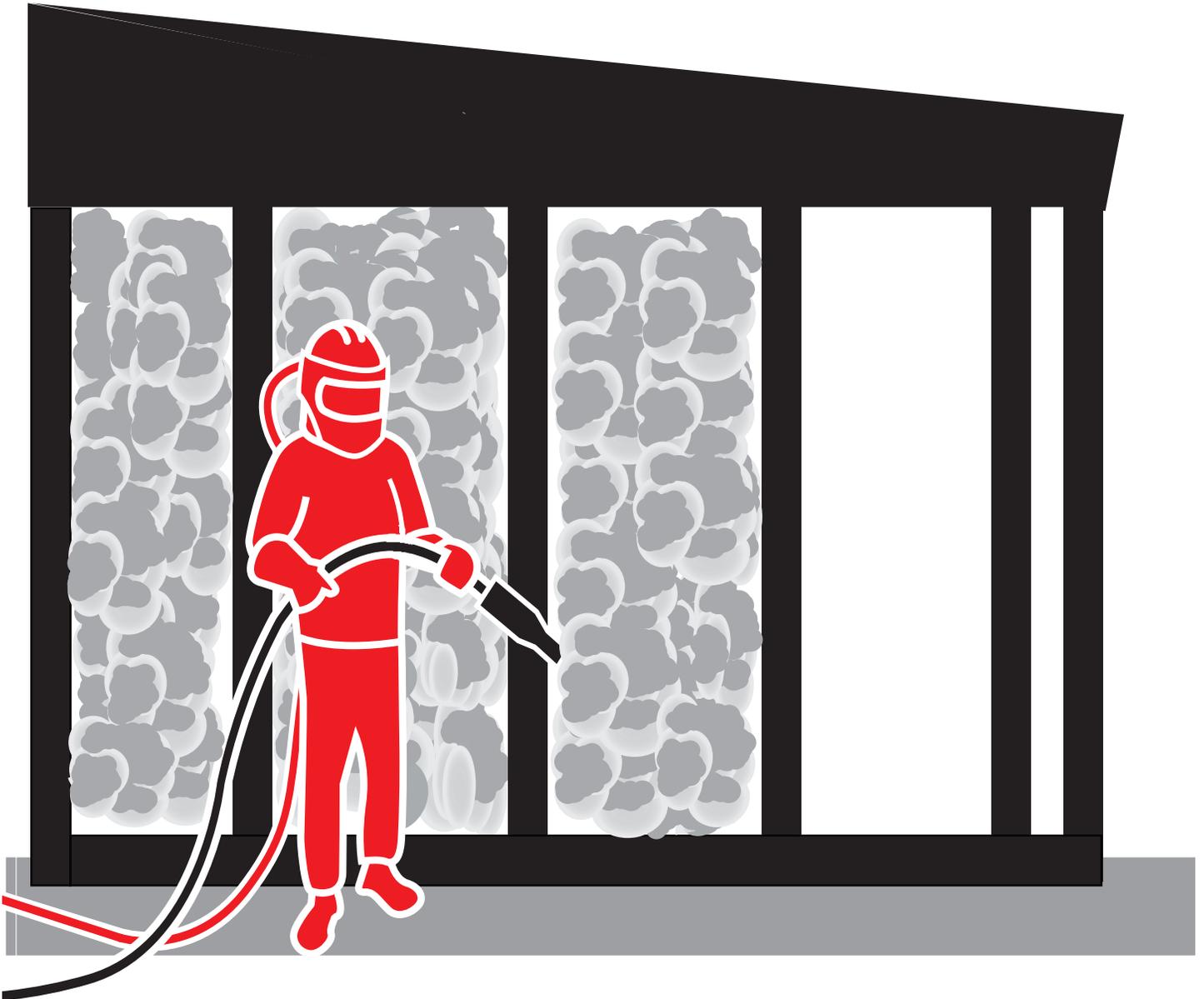
How can we stay safe today?

What can we do at the worksite to prevent exposure to isocyanates?

1. _____

2. _____

Isocyanates



- ✘ Make sure the work area is ventilated and the ventilation equipment is working properly.
- ✘ Wear a supplied-air or an air-purifying respirator, coveralls, chemical-resistant gloves, and eye protection.
- ✘ Do not remove your respirator immediately after spraying.