**How can improperly maintained eyewash stations cause infections?**

Water found in improperly maintained eyewash stations is more likely to contain organisms (*e.g., Acanthamoeba*, *Pseudomonas*, *and Legionella*) that thrive in stagnant or untreated water and are known to cause infections. When a worker uses an eyewash station that is not maintained, organisms in the water may come into contact with the eye, skin, or may be inhaled. Workers using eyewash stations after exposure to a hazardous chemical or material may have eye injuries that make the eye more susceptible to infection. Also, workers with skin damage or compromised immune systems (*e.g.,* transplant recovery, cancer, lupus) are at increased risk for developing illnesses from contaminated water.

Here at the GCVHCS we have 60 plumbed Emergency Eyewash, or Eyewash/Shower Combos, for employee safety, and plan to add more in the near future. Eyewash stations are critical emergency safety equipment intended to mitigate eye injuries when control methods do not prevent exposure. When the eyewash station is permanently connected to a source of potable water (i.e., plumbed) improper maintenance or inspections may present health hazards that can worsen or cause additional damage to a worker’s eye. The Service where the eyewash is located is required to perform and annotate a weekly inspection of the eyewash on the tag or log. The inspection requires flowing the water and ensuring adequate flow. Anyone needing more information may contact the Safety Office at ext. 34611.



***Figure 1.*** *Left, broad illumination; right, slit beam illumination. Early epithelial stage. Multifocal intraepithelial Acanthamoeba organisms.*

Reference OSHA Infosheet,”Health Effects from Contaminated Water in Eyewash Stations”, www.osha.gov

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