

HARMFUL WATER BOTTLE

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When working in hot or stuffy climates, a time-tested method of having an ample supply of water is "to take it with you." While water bottles are useful in hot, arid climates or on flight lines and in the field, they can cause problems for those working in areas where painting, sanding, metal grinding, and mixing chemicals and pesticides occur. This hazard also applies to areas where particles or vapors can be ingested. Since many water bottles have a rubber-end mouthpiece that has to be chewed or bit open, there is a significant chance for transferring chemicals to the mouth. Additionally, dusts can collect on the wet mouthpiece and chemical vapors can absorb into the rubber. You don't want to swallow these materials because they'll make you sick — either now or over time.

How Can I Stay Safe?

It's simple. Keep water bottles and camel packs out of these environments. Current Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Air Force regulations

(OSHA CFR 1910 expanded standards and AFOSH STD 91-501) prohibit food and drink in areas where potential ingestion hazards exist, and they discuss educating people on these ingestion hazards. So, take your breaks and drink water in a hazard-free environment. You also should wash your hands before eating, drinking, or smoking after working in an area with ingestion hazards. If you aren't sure if the area where you work is considered hazardous, then talk to your shop supervisor, base Safety, or Bioenvironmental Engineering Office to determine your shop's status. Besides the ingestion hazard, water bottles and any other portable devices have loose straps or ties which could get caught in equipment or on obstructions. While there have been few reports of injuries resulting from loose clothing or personal equipment, the potential for injury still exists.

The bottom line is to keep water bottles out of industrial areas and contact your base Safety or Bioenvironmental Engineering Office if you need more information. ▶



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