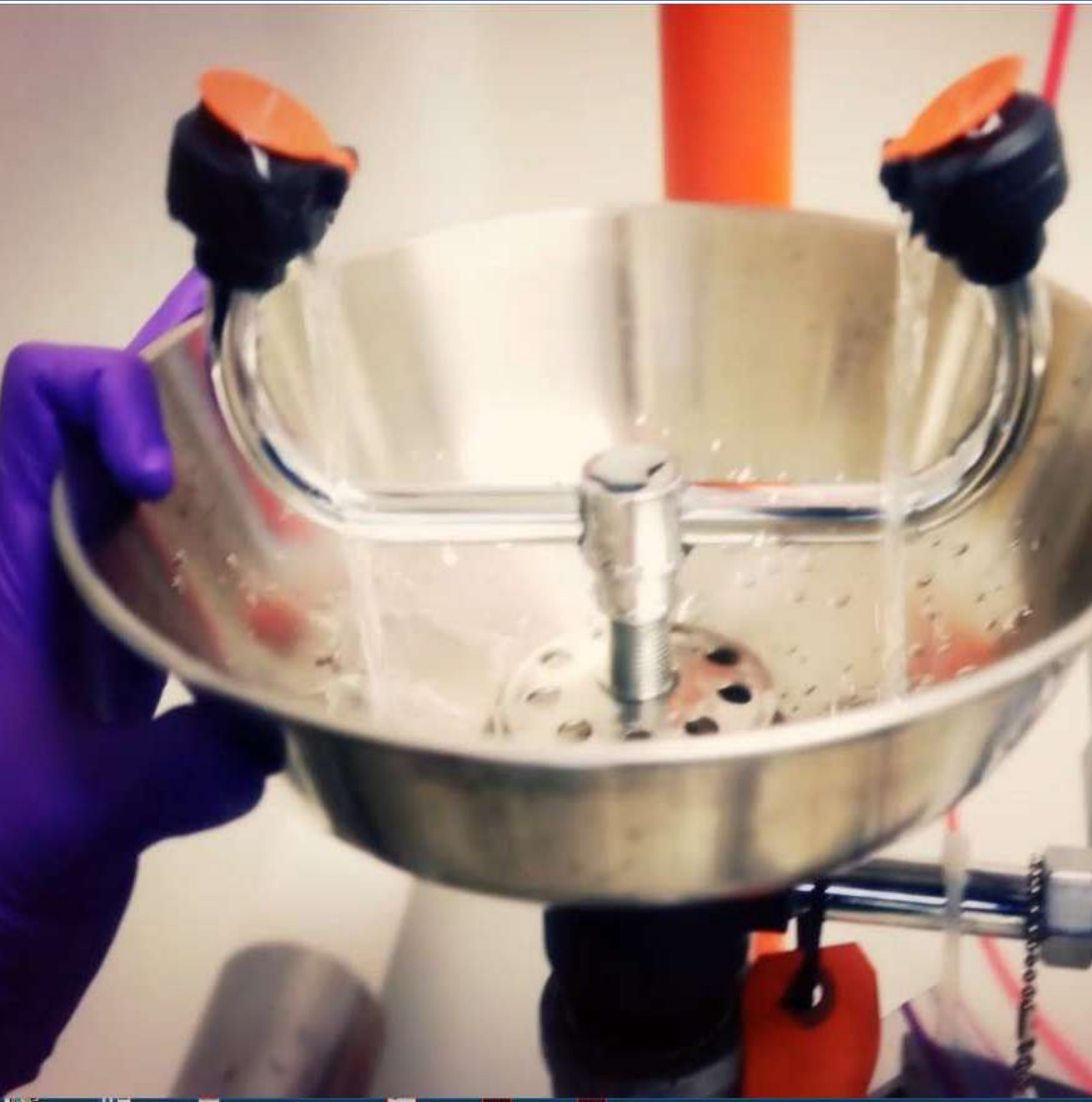


Eyewash Station Maintenance Critical Responsibility



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Eyewash Station Maintenance

Since transitioning to the Naval Safety Command (NAVSAFECOM), I've had the distinct opportunity to reconnect with our dedicated Sailors who perform essential maintenance tasks on our flight lines and in our hangars. As an aviation maintenance safety analyst, a key component of my responsibilities is to ensure all commands are equipped with the necessary tools and resources that enable Sailors and Marines to operate in optimal safety conditions. This component encompasses every aspect of aviation maintenance, to include ensuring commands provide the appropriate personal protective equipment, have access to current safety publications and are enforcing safety practices that significantly reduce the risk of workplace accidents.

One glaring issue that has emerged from the NAVSAFECOM local area assessments is the insufficient focus on maintaining eyewash stations – a vital piece of safety equipment often neglected. During recent preparations for a battery safety training module, I referred to the NAVAIR 17-15BAD-1 manual, which stipulates the requirement to have “permanently installed eyewash equipment within the workspace.” This regulation applies to fixed stations as well as portable eyewash units commonly found across various workspaces. Given their critical role in emergency response, I felt compelled to address some fundamental standards for emergency eyewash and shower equipment maintenance practices.

The importance of eyewash stations cannot be overstated. In the event of an eye injury, the first few seconds are critical to minimizing potential damage. As such, eyewash stations must be strategically located to ensure they are accessible within no more than 10 seconds from the hazard area, on the same level and along a path free of any obstructions that might impede immediate use. In many of our naval work centers, eyewash stations are ideally placed on a wall or attached to the side of a workbench, with clear signage to enhance the location. They are installed at a height of 33 to 45 inches from the deck, maintaining a minimum distance of six inches from any walls or obstructions to ensure unobstructed access.



Eyewash Station Maintenance

Eyewash station preventative maintenance is a non-negotiable aspect of workplace safety. Regular inspections should check for any indications of leakage or damage to the tubes or piping, with immediate repairs or replacements as needed. Weekly activation of these stations is mandatory to confirm their operational status and to ensure the flushing fluid is adequate and uncontaminated. It is also crucial to monitor the water temperature, which should be maintained between 60 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit to promote at least 15 minutes of continuous water irrigation – an essential factor in effective eye decontamination.

Documentation plays a vital role in maintenance routines. Each eyewash station must have a maintenance card that logs all checks and services performed. Furthermore, inspection and maintenance tags must be maintained and current to reflect the most recent inspections and any changes to the flushing fluids. While annual inspections are standard, our commitment to safety dictates these checks be as frequent and thorough as necessary to guarantee readiness.

In summary, while the upkeep of eyewash stations might seem like just another routine task, its importance cannot be understated. A fully functional and well-maintained eyewash station is not only a regulatory requirement but a critical lifeline that can significantly reduce the severity of eye injuries or prevent them altogether. Ensuring these stations are operational and always ready is a fundamental aspect of protecting our Sailors and Marines, reinforcing the overarching goal of maintaining the highest safety standards in all naval operations



Cover and inside photo: Screenshots from a training video demonstrating the procedures for conducting testing of the Emergency Eyewash and Shower station. (Video by Nicole McFarland)

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