

Spotlight On Safety

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Photographic Chemicals



Most common photographic chemicals can be used safely if simple precautions are followed. The following safety tips are applicable to most aqueous chemicals used in black-and-white and color photography. Always read the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for a specific chemical before use.

Safety Tips

- Avoid creating dust when mixing dry photographic chemicals. Use premixed chemicals if available. Mop any spilled dry chemicals
- Ensure ventilation in photographic workrooms is working properly (if you need assistance contact EH&S to have a technician evaluate ventilation system). Local exhaust ventilation may be required for more dangerous processes (selenium toning and all color processes)
- Wear disposable chemical resistant gloves or use tongs to avoid skin contact when handling photographic paper. Many photo chemicals are sensitizers and most are either acidic or alkaline
- Use the least toxic chemicals available. Avoid cyanides, heavy metals, and developers containing pyrocatechol or pyrogallol
- Use safety goggles
- Towels should be provided to encourage hand wiping. All clothing and towels used in the workroom must be washed frequently
- When mixing water and acid, always add acid to water (add water to the container first before carefully adding acid) to prevent violent splashing
- Properly dispose of chemical wastes. All photographic chemicals must be disposed of as hazardous waste with a waste tag generated on the UC Safety WASTE app
- Always wash hands after using chemicals and before eating or drinking.
- Don't eat or drink in work areas

Visit www.ehs.ucr.edu for additional information or call 951-827-5528 if you have any questions.