

Crude Oil and Your Health

Are you working directly with oil-contamination?

Crude oil contains highly toxic chemicals such as benzene and n-hexane that can cause cancer, birth defects, and permanent nerve damage.

Even brief exposure to crude oil can irritate and damage skin, cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, confusion, difficulty breathing and other health problems. Inhaling crude oil mist can cause chemical pneumonitis, a serious lung disease.

Serious harm from crude oil that may not be recognized quickly includes liver, kidney, respiratory, reproductive, blood, immune, and nervous system damage.

Especially Vulnerable Workers include:

Those with respiratory conditions (asthma, COPD, etc)

Women who may be pregnant

Those with nervous system, liver, kidney, or blood disorders

Protection

Wear gloves, masks, respirators, and water repellent clothing if you work with crude oil. Avoid exposure to air, water, mist, dust, sand, and other media contaminated with crude oil. Review the OSHA guidance on protective gear and practices - link is at websites below.

There is no way to predict who will suffer health problems, so minimize exposure whenever possible.

This handout does not provide medical advice. If you are experiencing any health problems, obtain local medical care as soon as possible.

Additional information and resources is available at

www.sciencecorps.org/crudeoilhazards.htm

www.waterkeeper.org