

TOOLBOX TALK: WATER AND TOILETS

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Two questions. Where is the drinking water on this site, and how many toilets are there for how many people? Somebody count.

The talk

An adequate supply of potable water shall be provided in all places of employment. Potable means it meets the drinking water standards of the state or local authority, or the EPA's National Primary Drinking Water Regulations at 40 CFR part 141. Not a hose off the standpipe.

The container rules are specific and they are about disease, not tidiness. A portable container used to dispense drinking water shall be capable of being tightly closed and equipped with a tap, and water shall not be dipped from containers. Any container used for drinking water shall be clearly marked as to its contents and not used for anything else.

And one flat prohibition, four words long: the common drinking cup is prohibited. If single service cups are supplied then there has to be a sanitary container for the clean ones and a receptacle for the used ones, which is the bit everybody forgets.

Nonpotable water, meaning water for industrial or firefighting purposes, gets signs saying clearly that it is unsafe and not to be used for drinking, washing or cooking. And there shall be no cross connection, open or potential, between a potable and a nonpotable system. Potential. A hose that could be swapped over counts.

Toilets, and there is a table. Twenty or fewer employees: one facility. Twenty or more: one toilet seat and one urinal per 40 workers. Two hundred or more: one toilet seat and one urinal per 50 workers. Under temporary field conditions there shall be not less than one toilet facility available, and where there is no sanitary sewer the options are privies where they will not contaminate ground or surface water, chemical, recirculating or combustion toilets.

There is one exception and it gets stretched further than it goes. The toilet requirements do not apply to mobile crews having transportation readily available to nearby toilet facilities. Readily available transportation to a facility that exists. Not a petrol station eight minutes away that somebody might let you use.

Washing facilities. The employer shall provide adequate washing facilities for employees applying paints, coatings, herbicides or insecticides, or in other operations where contaminants may be harmful, in near proximity to the worksite and equipped to actually remove the substance. Lavatories shall be available in all places of employment, with hot and cold running water or tepid running water, hand soap or similar cleansing agent, and individual

towels, air blowers or clean sections of continuous cloth toweling.

That last one matters more than it sounds on a job with lead, silica, solvents or pesticides, because the route into somebody is a sandwich eaten with the hands they have been working with. Which is also why no employee shall be allowed to consume food or beverages in a toilet room, nor in any area exposed to a toxic material.

And if a standard requires protective clothing because of contamination with toxic materials, change rooms with separate storage for street clothes and for the protective clothing have to be provided. Separate. The point is that the contaminated kit never touches what somebody wears home to their family.

Point at these before anybody starts

- The drinking water: is it potable, is the container tapped and closed, is it marked.
- Cups. A sanitary container for clean ones and a bin for used ones, or neither.
- The head count today against the table, and whether the toilets match it.
- Soap, water and towels at the lavatory, all three, not two of three.
- Where people are eating, and what is in the air or on the ground there.
- For anybody on paint, coating, herbicide or insecticide: somewhere to wash it off, near the work.

The rules that apply

- An adequate supply of potable water shall be provided in all places of employment. The common drinking cup is prohibited. Portable dispensing containers shall be capable of being tightly closed, equipped with a tap, clearly marked and not used for any other purpose, and water shall not be dipped from them.
- Outlets for nonpotable water shall be identified by signs indicating clearly that the water is unsafe and not to be used for drinking, washing or cooking, and there shall be no cross connection, open or potential, between potable and nonpotable systems.
- Toilets shall be provided per Table D-1: one facility for 20 or fewer employees; one toilet seat and one urinal per 40 workers at 20 or more; one toilet seat and one urinal per 50 workers at 200 or more. Under temporary field conditions not less than one toilet facility shall be available.
- The toilet requirements do not apply to mobile crews having transportation readily available to nearby toilet facilities.
- Adequate washing facilities shall be provided for employees applying paints, coatings, herbicides or insecticides or in other operations where contaminants may be harmful, in near proximity to the worksite. Lavatories shall have hot and cold or tepid running water, hand soap or similar cleansing agents, and individual towels or air blowers.
- No employee shall be allowed to consume food or beverages in a toilet room nor in any area exposed to a toxic material. Where protective clothing is required because of contamination with toxic materials, change rooms with separate storage for street clothes and protective clothing shall be provided.

Ask the crew

- How many toilets does a crew of 60 need under the table?
- What are the three things that have to be at a lavatory?
- Who on this site is covered by the mobile crew exception, and who only thinks they are?

Close with this

None of this is a comfort issue. Every line in it is there because something got into somebody.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

_____	Print name and signature
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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.