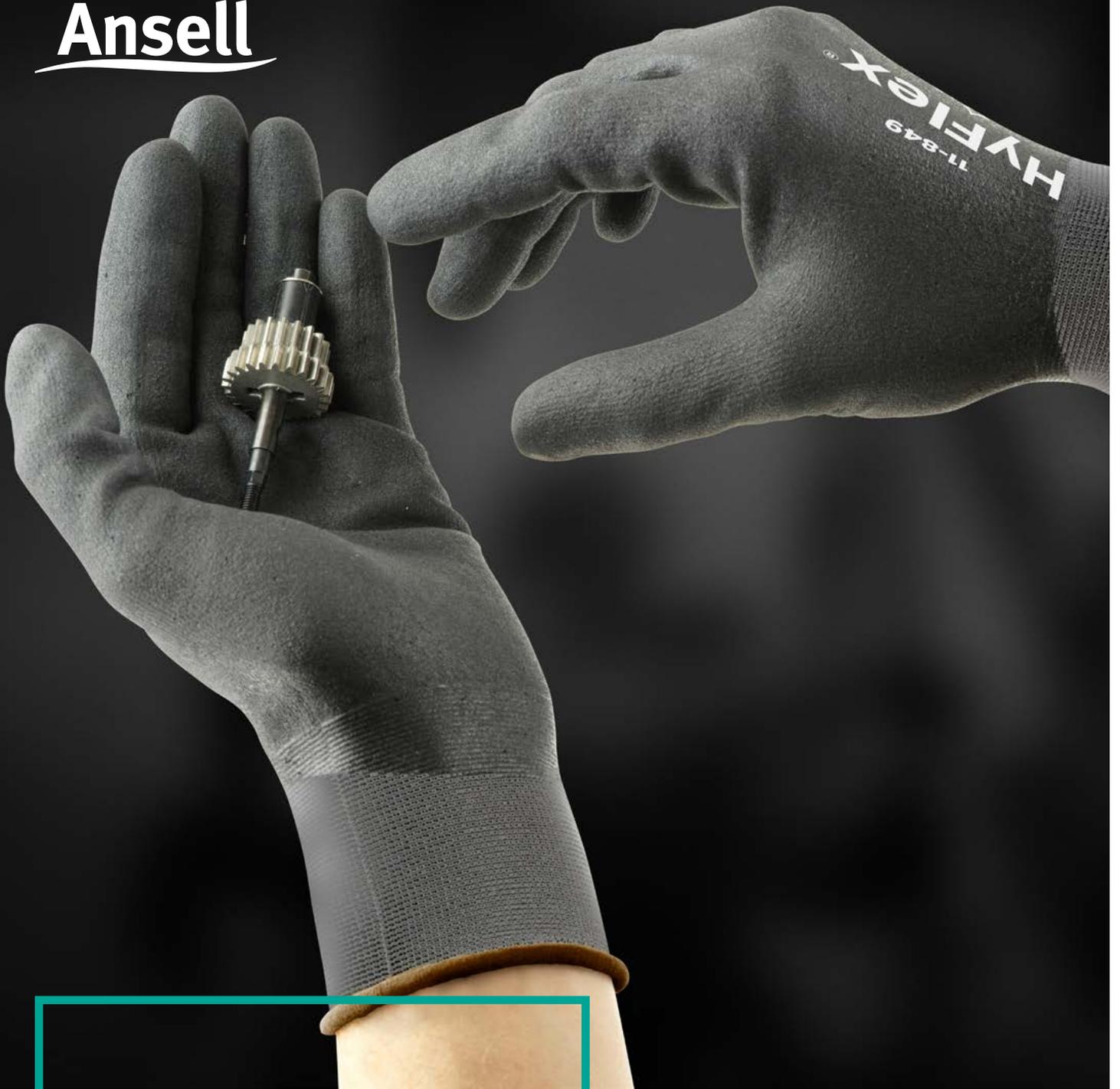


Ansell



DRY HANDS

HOW DRY HANDS POSITIVELY AFFECT PERFORMANCE

Providing a glove solution that keeps hands dry will deliver superior worker comfort, leading to greater productivity, and improve workplace safety compliance.

Even when diligent safety managers undertake a workplace assessment and identify the specific hazards associated with common workplace tasks and environments, some still fail to take the simplest of comfort factors into account, unknowingly putting workers at risk of illness or serious injury.

At face value for most safety managers considering the broad spectrum of hazard exposure, having wet hands probably sits at the innocuous end of the scale. In truth, when conditions create an excess of moisture, it can quickly lead to a range of undesirable outcomes – ranging from occupational skin diseases (OSD) through to PPE policy non-compliance, putting workers at risk of injury.

1

WHO IS AT RISK?



Skin conditions arising from wet hands can be the result of direct contact with water, chemicals and other liquids. Or through increased perspiration rates caused by high ambient temperatures and hand protection solutions constructed from non-breathable materials.

A range of occupations and industries are susceptible to skin conditions, particularly when individuals are required to undertake wet work, involving ongoing contact with liquids or frequent hand washing. Protective gloves are the obvious defence against regular liquid contact, with hand protection designed specifically to create a suitable barrier between skin and any unwanted substances.

In many instances however, the defence itself leads to an unwelcome scenario, as liquid build-up inside the glove can be as damaging as external exposure. Some circumstances leave

workers significantly exposed to heat and perspiration build-up, particularly when chemical protective gloves are worn, as they usually feature a polymer construction that does not promote effective moisture absorption and heat dissipation.

Troublesome environments and applications include distillation towers, hydrocracking in the oil and gas industries and working with heat transfer fluids as found in heat pumps, air conditioners and refrigeration equipment. Working in hot climates can further exacerbate the problem, as hands quickly heat up and start to perspire under higher ambient temperatures.

2



WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

The most prevalent recorded OSD is occupational contact dermatitis (OCD), which accounts for around 95% of reported cases, according to an 18-year study conducted by Safe Work Australia.

OCD is further broken down into;

- Irritant contact dermatitis (ICD); a rash that occurs because of skin contact with irritants. It may be acute – such as cement burns from kneeling in very alkaline wet cement – or chronic, caused by exposure over time to irritants such as wet work, soaps, detergents, shampoos, oils, solvents or dust. It also incorporates physical factors such as heat and sweating.
- Allergic contact dermatitis (ACD): an itchy rash caused by an immunological reaction to skin contact with chemicals, known as delayed hypersensitivity. This rash does not occur on initial skin contact with the chemical. Instead, people may become 'sensitised', which means that they will develop the rash on re-exposure to the chemical.

Most reported cases fall under the ICD banner.

Skin diseases aside, a common response to hot and sweaty hands – brought about by improper PPE selection – is for workers to simply remove their gloves, opening them up to the risk of injury.

3



HOW CAN YOU COMBAT THE ISSUES?

The Occupational Dermatology Research and Education Centre (ODREC) recommends that every workplace implements a documented skin care plan.

The skin care plan instructs workers on the appropriate use of hand washes, moisturisers and protective gloves. Among other things, ODREC recommends the use of a cotton liner to combat increased perspiration from glove use. While cotton liners may absorb some of the perspiration, they still trap moisture next to the skin, leaving the wearer's hands damp and making them susceptible to the ill-effects of ongoing liquid contact. Any absorption also serves to add extra weight, further impacting on worker comfort and increasingly the likelihood of glove removal.

Thanks to recent technology advances the cotton glove liner is now all but obsolete, with smart safety managers opting for a hand protection solution that incorporates advanced moisture management technology, such as Ansell's AQUADRI™ system.

Developed in direct response to perspiration build-up and its impact on worker productivity, AQUADRI™ is a patented technology that features an open-celled layer of nitrile foam on the inner surface of the glove. It is achieved by applying a wet gel to the cotton flocking during the forming process. When the flocking pierces the wet surface, it creates the celled-foam structure, producing a material capable of remarkably high absorbency – up to 10 times higher than cotton-flocking alone – while adding little weight. The result is a cooler, drier, more comfortable fit, lessening the risk of OSD and leading to a higher likelihood of PPE policy compliance.

4

THE SAFETY MANAGEMENT PROCESS IS AN ONGOING CYCLE



To avoid issues at the outset, make sure your risk assessment process factors in the environmental conditions, including ambient temperature and exposure to chemicals.

Conduct real-world trials of identified hand protection options across the full range of tasks to be carried out and don't forget to consider the length of time the gloves will be worn.

It's important to implement a facility for feedback from staff so you can ensure the chosen solution continues to offer optimal comfort while still providing the highest safeguard against hazards, including occupational skin diseases.

Equipping your team with the most effective hand protection solution not only creates a safeguard from risk, it can also have a significant impact on productivity, so be sure to consider all available options before making your ultimate selection.



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