TOOLBOX TALK AWARENESS PACKAGES

HAZ-CYN · Cyanide Awareness

Product Overview

Audience: Workers and supervisors where cyanide is used, stored or transported, such as gold processing, electroplating and laboratories · Duration: 20–30 minutes

Version 1.0 · 22 November 2026

For anyone who works where cyanide is used, such as gold processing and electroplating: how cyanide harms, why it must never meet acid, the controls that keep it contained, and the site's cyanide first aid procedure.

Cyanide is a fast-acting poison. At work it is used mainly to recover gold and other metals in mining and mineral processing, in electroplating and metal finishing, and in some laboratories and chemical works. It can harm people who swallow it, breathe it in as a gas or dust, or get it on their skin. Cyanide solutions are kept alkaline for a reason: if cyanide meets acid, or a solution becomes acidic, it gives off hydrogen cyanide, a deadly gas.

This talk covers where cyanide is used, how it harms, the signs of poisoning, the controls from closed systems and keeping cyanide away from acids to gas detection and hygiene, and what to do in an emergency: get out, raise the alarm, call the emergency number and follow your site's cyanide first aid procedure. It is awareness, not training in cyanide handling, first aid or emergency response.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Name where cyanide is used at work, from gold processing to electroplating and laboratories
- Explain how cyanide harms: swallowed, breathed in as gas or dust, or through the skin
- Explain why cyanide must never meet acid, and why solutions are kept alkaline as the process specifies
- Recognise the signs of cyanide poisoning, and why every exposure is an emergency
- Explain the controls, starting with closed systems and keeping cyanide away from acids
- Respond to an alarm, a spill or a person who is unwell: get out, raise the alarm and follow your site's cyanide first aid procedure

What it covers

Module	Covers
Why it matters	Where cyanide is used; How it harms; Why it must never meet acid
Controls that work	Closed systems and storage; Keeping it alkaline; Detection, hygiene and PPE
Your part	Act on an alarm; Cyanide first aid procedure; Report it

Activities

- Where is the cyanide risk: workers find the risk in four jobs, from a leach tank to a plating line, and decide on a safer way

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- What would you do: workers decide what to do in four situations, from an acid delivery parked by the cyanide store to a workmate who becomes dizzy and confused

What is in the package

Item	File
Editable PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes, plus PDF	02_TRAINING_PRESENTATION/Training Presentation.pptx and .pdf
Facilitator guide with a running sheet, discussion prompts and model answers	03_FACILITATOR_GUIDE/Facilitator Guide.docx and .pdf
Participant handout with the key points to take away	04_PARTICIPANT_HANDOUT/Participant Handout.docx and .pdf
Attendance record form, to capture who attended, when, and who facilitated	06_RECORDS/Attendance Record.docx and .pdf
Excel attendance register	06_RECORDS/Attendance Register.xlsx
Multiple-choice theory assessment, to record understanding if your business wants to	05_ASSESSMENT/Theory Assessment.docx and .pdf
Answer key for the assessment	05_ASSESSMENT/Assessment Answer Key.docx and .pdf
Certificate template	06_RECORDS/Certificate Template.docx
Start here: Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms, Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (four PDFs)

What you need to deliver it

- A facilitator such as a supervisor, leading hand or WHS adviser who has read the facilitator guide and knows your site's arrangements for the topic
- A screen or projector, or printed slides or handouts: it works in a crib room, site office or on a video call
- Your own site procedures for the topic, to point to during the session

Questions

Does it teach cyanide first aid or the antidote? No. The talk tells workers to raise the alarm, call the emergency number and follow their site's cyanide first aid procedure, and to know where the procedure and the cyanide first aid equipment are kept. Cyanide first aid, including any antidote, is for people trained under the site's procedure and for medical staff. The talk quotes no doses, pH values or gas levels: check them in the SDS and your site's procedures.

Can we add our own site procedures and photos? Yes. The slides, handout and guide are editable, and the facilitator guide marks the places to add your own procedures, contacts and photos of your workplace.

Do we have to use the assessment? No. It is there if your business wants a record that each worker understood the key points. The attendance record on its own shows who attended and when.

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TOOLBOX TALK

Cyanide Awareness

A fast-acting poison: where cyanide is used, and how to keep it contained

20–30 minutes · Workers and supervisors where cyanide is used, stored or transported, such as gold processing, electroplating and laboratories

[Company name] · [Date] · [Facilitator name]

CYN

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What this talk is, and is not

This talk covers

- ✓ Where cyanide is used
- ✓ How it harms, and why it must never meet acid
- ✓ The controls that keep it contained
- ✓ What to do in an emergency

This talk is not

- ✕ Cyanide handling training
- ✕ Cyanide first aid training
- ✕ Emergency response training
- ✕ Our procedure: **[Our cyanide procedure]**

Awareness only. Handling cyanide, cyanide first aid and emergency response need specific training under the site's procedures.

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Where cyanide is used

Cyanide is used where metals are recovered, plated or treated.

- Gold and metal recovery: leach tanks and gold rooms
- Mixing, storage and unloading areas
- Tailings and process water at mine sites
- Electroplating and metal finishing
- Some laboratories and chemical works

A composite example

- A cleaner at a plating shop washes the floor near the cyanide plating tank with an acid cleaner.
- Soon after, two workers nearby feel dizzy and short of breath.

Know where the cyanide is on your site, and what is near it.

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Duties under health and safety laws

The business must

- Identify where cyanide is used and stored
- Keep it contained and away from acids
- Provide detection, PPE and first aid
- Plan and practise for emergencies

You must

- Follow the cyanide procedures
- Keep acids away from cyanide
- Act on alarms and symptoms
- Report leaks, spills and near misses

Most health and safety laws give these duties. Check the law where you work (in Australia, WHS or OHS laws).

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The order of controls for cyanide

1. **Elimination** A process without cyanide, where one exists
2. **Substitution** A less hazardous form, such as solution instead of solid
3. **Isolation** Closed systems, bunds, and acids stored well apart
4. **Engineering** pH control, ventilation, fixed gas detection, showers
5. **Administrative** Procedures, permits, signs, personal detectors, training
6. **PPE** The gloves, eye and face protection the SDS requires

HIGHER ORDER

Higher order controls remove or control the hazard at the source, or put a barrier between people and the hazard.

LOWER ORDER

Lower order controls rely on people to do a thing or wear a thing, every time, tired, distracted or rushed.

Behaviours are not on the hierarchy, but behaviours and culture decide whether every control on it actually works.

Acid near cyanide is never acceptable.

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Cyanide Awareness

Participant handout · keep this

Cyanide is a fast-acting poison, and it gives off a deadly gas when it meets acid. Keep it contained. Keep this page.

The order of controls

1. A process without cyanide, where one exists
2. A less hazardous form or method
3. Closed systems; acids stored well apart
4. pH control, ventilation, gas detection
5. Procedures, permits, detectors, training
6. The PPE the SDS requires

The signs

- ■ Headache, dizziness, nausea, short of breath
- ■ Confusion, collapse, seizures

Never

- ■ Let cyanide meet acid
- ■ Eat, drink or smoke in cyanide areas

Before you start

- ☐ Could this job bring me into contact with cyanide?
- ☐ Is anything acidic nearby: acid, acid cleaners or drains?
- ☐ Is the system closed, and the process within its settings?
- ☐ Is my gas detector on and worn, if required?
- ☐ Do I know the alarm, the way out and the first aid procedure?

Alarm, spill or symptoms

- ■ Get out upwind; warn others; call your local emergency number (000 in Australia)
- ■ Follow the cyanide first aid procedure

Who and where

- ■ **[Our cyanide procedure]**
- ■ **[Cyanide first aid and emergency arrangements]**
- ■ **[Who to report to here]**

Cyanide must never meet acid. Alarm or symptoms: get out, raise the alarm, and follow the cyanide first aid procedure.

This is awareness training. It is not a licence, a ticket, a permit or a competency. It is not cyanide handling, cyanide first aid or emergency response training.

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