Health & Safety in the Darkroom

While the majority of the black and white chemicals are in the range of non-toxic to slightly toxic to most people, black and white developers are in the range of slightly toxic to toxic, especially if these developers are ingested, inhaled or come in contact with bare skin.

- Long term and consistent unsafe exposure to darkroom chemicals can lead to bronchitis, sinusitis, increased allergic sensitivity, skin rashes and a host of other more serious damage.
- It is vital to your health that you follow these rules!

It is also vital to your health that if you have bronchitis, sinusitis, allergic-sensitivity, are pregnant, or are taking any medication (especially lithium carbonate based!) that you consult your doctor to make certain that it is safe for you to work around photographic chemistry.

DARKROOM HAZARDS

VERY TOXIC

BLACK AND WHITE DEVELOPERS

Hazards:

- Skin and eye irritants.
- Can cause allergic reaction and allergic sensitivity.
- Especially hazardous in stock mixing stage, which is why you aren't allowed to mix them.

STOP BATH

Hazards:

- Concentrate is highly toxic by skin contact, inhalation or ingestion.
- Continued inhalation of working solution can cause severe sinusitis and bronchitis, which is why you work only with the diluted form.

SLIGHTLY TOXIC

FIXER

Hazards:

- Not significantly hazardous, although may cause irritation of skin and allergies.
- If splashed on skin rinse thoroughly with cold water.
- If splashed in eyes flush immediately and for fifteen minutes with cold water and seek medical attention.

THE RULES

Never work alone in the darkroom, especially outside of class time when there is no photography teacher in the immediate vicinity.

- Make sure you can hear the ventilation system working before using the darkroom.
- In the smaller darkroom, you will need to flip the switch on the wall outside first to activate the venting.

- Do not bring coats, backpacks, or chairs/stools into the darkroom.
- They are potential tripping hazards.

Report any improperly working equipment immediately.

- Never work in a messy darkroom.
- If you find it in a mess, clean it up before you start your work, no matter who made the mess.
- Clean up after yourself to leave a safe environment for the next people using the space.

- You must wear gloves or use tongs when processing black and white paper.
- The only place you may use bare hands is to remove prints from the water bath or to wash prints.
- Developers are toxic, especially if absorbed through the skin over long periods of time.

Only your teacher or a TTOC with WHMIS can mix up chemistry. If you need chemicals mixed ask your teacher.

- Clean up any chemical spills immediately.
- Flood the area with cold water and wipe up with paper towels, cleaning until you are certain the chemicals are gone.
- Chemistry dries, turns to powder, gets on clothes and books, and then into your lungs or it is absorbed into your skin.

No eating or drinking in the darkroom.

- Keep all chemicals off your skin, out of your mouth, and away from your eyes.
- If you get any chemicals on your skin, flush the area immediately with cool running water.

- Avoid touching any electrical equipment with wet hands.
- Never go to the dry area of the darkroom (the enlarging stations) with wet hands.
- Make sure there is paper towel available before beginning work.

Keep your work space clean and uncontaminated.

At the end of each class, cover the trays to reduce the fumes caused by evaporation.

- If you use gloves or tongs, wash your gloves with soap before you remove them, then wash them inside and out with soap and hang to dry.
- Whether you use gloves or tongs, wash your hands thoroughly with soap before smoking, drinking or eating.

- If you become lightheaded and/or dizzy, let the others know you will be leaving the darkroom so they can cover up their paper.
- Go outside for fresh air, making sure your teacher knows where you are.
- If you are really dizzy, have another student escort you.

- Remember, people have varying sensitivities to chemicals.
- If you have had allergic reactions to any chemicals in the past, you should pay close attention to the effects that darkroom chemicals have on you, and you should be extra careful about following all safety procedures.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

CHEMICALS SPLASHED INTO EYES:

- Have another student help you to the eyewash, and then immediately flood the eyes and continue to flood them for 15 minutes.
- If it's concentrate, seek medical attention immediately (***however, no one is supposed to be working with concentrate!)***.

CHEMICALS SPLASHED ON SKIN:

- Immediately flood skin with water for at least 15 minutes until chemical is washed away.
- Seek medical attention immediately if you sense you need it, or if any change in skin condition occurs.

- Remember that your eyes, lungs, and skin are porous membranes and can absorb chemical vapors.
- **It is your job to protect yourself.**