

Safe Work Practice	Acid Glass Etching – Graffiti Removal	SWP No.	SWP10.0
Department	Maintenance and Facilities	Creation Date	January 2017
Location	Buses and Bus Stops	Revision Date	May 2019

GENERAL

The purpose of this procedure is to provide information to staff on acid-etching graffiti and the steps to follow in the event that "acid-etching" is found on glass bus shelters and revenue or non-revenue vehicles. Fresh "acid-etching" will appear to be white and cloudy in appearance, however, once neutralized the glass will appear dull gray in colour.

BACKGROUND

A form of graffiti known as "acid-etching" is appearing on glass bus shelters and on revenue vehicles. Acid-attack graffiti was first spotted in 1999 during the World Trade Organization meeting held in Seattle. The ingredients utilized are dangerous and everyone should avoid touching any etchings.

Etch cream can cause deeply penetrating burns to the skin, eyes and lungs. Chemical burns may be felt several hours after touching the product at which time the burns will be deep in the tissue.

Products utilized usually have a form of hydrofluoric acid also known as: Hydrogen Fluoride, HF, Fluorohydric Acid, Aqueous or Hydrogen Fluoride. Other products can contain ammonium bifluoride and sulfuric acid.

Acid etching graffiti typically looks like it's been made with a paintbrush dipped in paste while other taggers utilize a felt pen dipped in the product. Whatever the method of application, if an unknown substance is located on glass don't touch it. An unsuspecting person might not know what they are touching and then they could touch their eyes or mouth and cause severe damage.

PROCEDURE

If "acid-etching" graffiti is noticed or suspected on a bus shelter, immediately advise a Transit Supervisor; do not touch the area. If "acid-etching" is noticed or suspected on a revenue vehicle, do not touch the area. Request a change off and ensure that no one touches the glass or residue left on or near the window.

Poison Control Centre advises that the normal treatment for anyone who has touched the product is to flush the area with water for at least 10 - 15 minutes. Because of the ability of the product to produce severe delayed tissue damage without necessarily producing pain, all skin, eye or tissue contact should receive immediate first aid and medical evaluation, even if the injury appears minor or no pain is felt. Poison Control Centre at 604-682-5050 can be contacted for more detailed information.

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CLEANING OF THE BUS

Staff will treat a suspected "acid-etched" bus as a sick bus and ensure that no one enters or touches the contaminated area. In most cases, the "acid-etched" product utilized is of a low concentration. However lower concentrations may not produce pain or burning sensation until hours after the exposure (see paragraph above).

PROCEDURES FOR CLEANING OF THE BUS

1. Restrict access to the bus.
2. Make sure plastic bags are available for removal of contaminated items from the bus. Have a source of fresh water available to neutralize the area.
3. Wear disposable waterproof gloves typically medium or heavyweight Viton, nitrile or natural rubber gloves are worn.
4. Always use and wear chemical splash goggles together with a face shield when cleaning the contaminated area.
5. Always wear disposable coveralls over your work clothing and dispose of them after use. No exposed skin.
6. Open all doors and ensure adequate ventilation within the area (open windows).
7. Neutralize and soak the area with fresh water.
8. Wipe up the area and place all rags, towels, etc. into the plastic bag and dispose of in regular garbage.
9. Clean protective equipment after use.
10. Properly remove and dispose of disposable gloves.
11. Wash your hands.