

Good Practice Sheet for Uses of Chromium Trioxide

B7 Chromium plating operations in an open tank with manual loading to bath

This sheet will help employers to comply with the requirements of EU Directive 2004/37 and the terms of the REACH authorizations for uses of chromium trioxide. Working with chromium trioxide may cause cancer. This sheet describes good practice to reduce exposure. It covers the points that should be followed to reduce exposure. It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures. This document should be made available to all persons who may be exposed to chromium trioxide in the workplace so that they make the best use of the control measures available.

The Process

This GPS covers the industrial, electroplating of articles with a surface layer of metallic chromium in one or more open plating tanks. The plating line contains an aqueous chromium trioxide solution (electrolyte). Chromium plate is deposited on parts or articles in the tank(s) when an electric current is applied to the system. The treated parts are rinsed following plating.



! Photograph shows plating at open tanks with manual loading not in compliance with this GPS as P3 filter missing.

Equipment Design and Access

The plating system involves one or more open tanks and is designed to support plating of parts with varying dimensions and short plating cycles. Workers have access to the plating tank. Articles or parts are mounted on supports and transported through the plating system manually. The electrolyte remains in the tank throughout operations and the electric current to the tank is switched off when parts are lowered into or lifted from the plating tanks. Parts are rinsed with water after they are lifted from the plating tanks and the rinse water drains back to the plating tank.

An open plating system has the following features:

- Articles are mounted/dismounted to a rack or a crane/hoist in an area adjacent or separate to the plating tanks. The rack, crane or hoist is manually operated to transfer the articles through the plating system. ✓
- Continuous fixed LEV removes chromium trioxide mist from above the tank(s). ✓
- Parts are rinsed with water after they are lifted from the plating tanks; the rinse-water returns to the plating tank. ✓

In case these features are not in place, this GPS does not apply, but another may. Measures relevant for ancillary tasks are also described in separate GPS. A full list of GPS is available at [link](#).

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Chromium Trioxide Emissions

Chromium trioxide mist or aerosols can be released from the tanks. Residual chromium trioxide on equipment surfaces is possible. Appropriate risk management measures should be adopted, as necessary.

Risk Management Measures - Workers

- Electrically interlocked control systems ensure the electric current to the plating process can only be switched on when the extraction unit (LEV) is operating. If the exhaust system fails, the electric current to the process automatically switches off immediately.
- Electric current to the plating tank is switched off when parts are lowered into or lifted from the tank.
- Use of a mist suppressant is recommended to minimize chromium trioxide aerosols.
- Process equipment must be regularly inspected and rinsed to remove residual chromium trioxide, which appears as dark red traces on the equipment. See GPS D4.
- Implement appropriate measures to prevent cross-contamination from equipment and PPE.

Risk Management Measures – Environment

- The air extraction system must discharge to atmosphere via a filtration or scrubber unit with State-of-the-Art chromium trioxide removal efficiency.
- Wastewater containing hexavalent chromium should not be discharged to surface or groundwater, but treated to effectively remove hexavalent chromium prior to release to the environment or managed as a hazardous waste.
- Floors, drains and equipment in process and chemical and waste storage areas should be sealed and regularly maintained to ensure integrity.

PPE

To minimize potential exposure to chromium trioxide, all persons accessing the plating line must wear:

- P3 filter.
- Protective eye goggles.
- Protective gloves.
- Acid-resistant clothing / footwear.

GPS E7 and your supplier's extended Safety Data Sheet (SDS) provide relevant information on PPE.

Training and Supervision

All persons with access to the plating line must be instructed about the risks of working with chromium trioxide, the safe way of handling chromium trioxide and use of PPE and other control equipment. Workers must be properly trained and equipped to carry out their duties, and to safely cease such duties as needed. Adequate supervision must be provided at all times.

Monitoring

Adequate monitoring data must be available to evidence absence of worker exposure and evaluate environmental release. GPS E1-E4 provide further information. Expert input is advisable to ensure an appropriate monitoring program that also meets regulatory requirements.

A typical worker exposure monitoring program will involve personal monitoring of all employees with access to the plating line. Static air monitoring may also be appropriate.

Monitoring should be carried out annually until there is adequate evidence that exposure is minimized and stable. Monitoring may be reintroduced following significant changes to the system.

Other Relevant Good Practice Sheets

Other GPS are also likely to be applicable. A full list can be accessed at [link](#).