

DECEMBER *Safety Talk*

Topic: Operating & Maintaining the Photocopier



Have you ever considered what is in the toner that makes the photocopier work?

The black “ink” in a copier is a very fine black powder made of plastic resin, iron powder and Carbon Black. A high-quality photo-printer toner would be very fine. In comparison, a toner for a low-end copy machine would be coarse.

Of course, colour toners won’t have Carbon Black, but will contain other chemicals in powder form.

REVIEW the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for the product in your copier. If you do not have a MSDS, under Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System legislation, you may not use the product until you get one and review it!

You should review the contents in your toner with the table of exposure limits found in OH&S Regulation Part 5.

Regardless of the toner being used or the chemicals it contains, it can be an irritant as it is a very fine powder that can be inhaled. Imagine inhaling flour and you’ll get an idea of what a cloud of toner could be like.

To replace toner in your photocopier, review the operators manual that came with the machine, or look for instructions online. Every machine is different.

Remove the empty toner cartridge and place it in the new toner box for recycling.

In all cases, every new toner will probably need to be gently shaken to loosen the product inside, and a tab or tape will need to be removed before putting it in the machine.

If the waste toner receptacle is full in the photocopier, DON’T shake toner out into the garbage – the fine powder will be everywhere. Replace with an empty receptacle and send the full container back to the photocopier supplier in a recycling program.



If toner dust gets spilled onto the floor when cartridges are exchanged, gently sweep up toner that is spilled. Sweep slowly and deliberately so dust is not created. If a vacuum cleaner is available with a HEPA filter capable of handling fine particles, you may vacuum.

If you get toner in your eyes, flush with water to remove the particles.

Toner on the skin should be washed off with soap and water as soon as it is practical to do so. Don’t eat or smoke until you’ve removed yourself from the environment and washed the toner off.

If you inhale toner, leave the area, gargle with plenty of water, and get fresh air immediately.

If toner is swallowed, dilute by drinking a large amount of water.

Chemicals generated during operation of a typical photocopier include: ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide and volatile organic compounds.

Because of this, copiers should only be used in rooms with adequate ventilation.

