

“See How to Prevent Eye Injuries”

Why It Matters:

- ☞ It has been estimated that 2,000 eye injuries occur in the workplace every day.
- ☞ In 10 percent to 20 percent of those injuries, the person loses some or all sight in one or both eyes.
- ☞ Safety experts say that 90 percent of all eye injuries can be prevented.



Most eye injuries should never happen. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, workplace eye injuries are a leading cause of eye trauma, vision loss, and blindness. The Academy also estimates that 90 percent of all eye injuries could have been prevented by using the right kind of protective eyewear. So it's critically important that employees take eye safety seriously by understanding the potential causes of eye injuries and how to protect themselves.

How many people do you think would say, “I’ve got two eyes – I can afford to lose one?” Nobody in their right mind! And yet, how many of your employees right this minute could be taking the risk of losing an eye in a job accident? Maybe more than you’d like to think. To keep them safe from eye injuries, take advantage of the fact that August is “Eye Injury Prevention Month” to work in a little eye safety training during the next few weeks.

The “Big Three” reasons for eye injuries on the job. The Department of Labor says that the three most common reasons for workplace eye injuries are:

1. Not being aware of potential eye hazards;
2. Not using eye protection; and
3. Using the wrong type of eye protection for the hazard.

A hazard assessment is a good place to start. For all kinds of personal protective equipment, OSHA recommends conducting detailed hazard assessments of the workplace to determine the types of PPE employees should be required to use. Apply this approach to your eye safety training sessions by asking the group to name all the eye hazards in the workplace. They may realize that some eye hazards are obvious, while others are not. The list includes:

- ▲ **Impact:** from flying chips, particles, sand, dirt, etc.
- ▲ **Burns:** from sparks, molten metal, or chemical splashes
- ▲ **Heat:** extremely high temperatures can cause eye damage
- ▲ **Irritation:** from chemical vapors or dust
- ▲ **Light radiation:** from welding and similar operations
- ▲ **Glare:** may not cause eye injury, but affects ability to see well and work safely



But don’t stop there! There’s more employees can do to prevent eye injuries. Make sure they take these other precautions as well:

- ☞ Obey all warning signs requiring eye protection.
- ☞ Always put on protective eyewear before entering an area where hazards may be present.
- ☞ When in doubt, assume that eye hazards are present.

☞ If you're not sure what the correct type of eye protection is in a particular situation, ask your supervisor before you begin to work.

Making the most of your eye protection. To offer maximum protection safety, eyewear must fit well and be in good condition.

- *Proper fit:* Eye protection is only as good as it fits. Poor fit is not only uncomfortable, but it also defeats the purpose of wearing the protection to keep objects, vapors, splashes, etc., away from the eyes. Make sure eye protection fits snugly enough to keep out hazards, but comfortably enough to see and move around easily. To get a good fit with safety goggles, adjust the strap and place it low on the back of the head. Goggles should fit comfortably on the bridge of the nose, and the center of the lens should be in front of the eye.
- *Inspection:* Inspect eye protection before each use, checking for bent or damaged frames, scratched or pitted lenses, and loose or damaged headbands. Replace any damaged equipment right away.
- *Care and maintenance:* After each wearing, wash eye protection gently in warm soapy water, rinse thoroughly, and air-dry. After chemical exposure or before use by another employee, use a disinfectant to clean eye protection. Store eye protection in a clean dustproof case.

