



Keeping an Eye on Eye Protection

Your eyes are constantly at risk on the job-site—whether you work in a manufacturing plant, a lab or a construction site. Some studies show that about 2,000 eye injuries take place each and every day. Sadly, 10 to 20% of these eye injuries result in temporary or permanent vision loss.

Perhaps even more eye-opening is this statistic: three out five people who suffer from eye injuries were not wearing eye protection when the accident occurred.



If you want to shield your eyes from harm on the worksite, read on to learn more about jobsite eye injuries and how to prevent them with the proper protective eye wear.

The Usual Suspects: Common Causes of Eye Injuries

Although there are countless causes for jobsite eye injuries, some of the most common offenders are:

- **Flying objects:** About 70% of jobsite eye injuries are caused by flying debris or falling objects, according to a Bureau of Labor Statistics Survey.
- **Chemicals:** Many injuries are the result of eyes coming into contact with dangerous chemicals.

- **Negligence:** A great deal of eye injuries are the result of negligence on the worksite, such as poor maintenance, substandard safety habits, misuse of tools and improper eye protection.

Eye Protection 101

It is extremely important to choose the right eye protection for your specific job. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that employers provide workers with suitable eye protection. Some workers may need to use a different type of eye protection from day to day or even hour to hour as their duties change.

Here are the different types of eye protection available to workers:

- **Goggles:** If you work around a lot of liquid pesticides, toxic chemicals and/or dust, goggles may be your best option. They provide better protection against splashes and dust than safety glasses. Make sure that the goggles fit tightly against your face for the ultimate protection.
- **Glass eye protection:** Not only are glass lenses less likely to scratch, but they can withstand chemical exposure as well as protection from flying objects. Additionally, if you have vision problems, you can get prescription lenses.
- **Plastic and polycarbonate eye protection:** These eye protection products are generally

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lightweight and protect well against welding splatter. Although they are less likely to fog up, plastic and polycarbonate products are not very scratch resistant and do not accommodate prescriptions.

- **Shielded safety glasses:** If your job requires safety glasses, make sure to choose shielded safety glasses. Shields will offer your eyes more protection from flying debris as well as chemicals suspended in the air.
- **Full face shields:** If you work in an environment where you could be exposed to an airborne substance, you should wear a full face shield. However, a face shield alone is not enough to protect your eyes—wear approved safety glasses beneath the shield.

Once you determine the appropriate type of eye protection for your line of work, be sure to follow these safety guidelines on the jobsite:

- If you are working around flying chips or particles, chemical gases or vapors, hazardous liquid chemicals, acids or caustics, electrical sparks, molten metal, dust or swinging ropes or chains, wear goggles or a face shield.
- Make sure that your eye protection is approved for your specific environment.
- When opening a container, always turn it away from your face.
- Always keep sharp or pointed objects away from your face and eyes.

- Do not wear outdated or scratched prescription lenses—this can warp your vision.
- Never remove protective eye wear until after you have turned off the tool in use.
- Replace cracked or damaged goggles or glasses as soon as possible.
- Focus! When you are using power tools or working with dangerous substances, always concentrate on the task at hand.
- If your eyes are starting to feel strained, stop and take a break.
- If you get a small piece of dust, wood or another object in your eye, flush it out with eye wash solution as you look down. If eyewash solution is not available, flush the eye with water.
- If you get pesticide into your eyes, use a portable eye flush dispenser immediately. If you do not have an eye flush dispenser at hand, call for help so someone can guide you to an eyewash station.
- Flush your eye with eyewash solution for 15 minutes and have someone call for medical attention.
- If you get a substance in your eye, have a co-worker check the Material Safety Data sheet and/or product label for the proper first aid instructions.



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