

## PREVENTING EYE INJURIES

Every day an estimated 1,000 eye injuries occur in American workplaces. The financial cost of these injuries is enormous--more than \$300 million per year in lost production time, medical expenses, and workers compensation. No dollar figure can adequately reflect the personal toll these accidents take on the injured workers.

*What contributes to eye injuries at work?* The biggest reason that workers are injured is because they were not wearing eye protection. Nearly three out of every five workers injured were not wearing eye protection at the time of the accident. The lesson here is wear your eye protection. It doesn't do any good hanging around your neck or sitting in your locker. About 40 of the injured workers were wearing some form of eye protection when the accident occurred but they were wearing the wrong kind of eye protection for the job. These workers were most likely to be wearing eyeglasses with no side shields. Make sure you understand what eye protection you need to be wearing for the job you are doing.

*What causes eye injuries?* Almost 70% of the accidents studied resulted from flying or falling objects or sparks striking the eye. Injured workers estimated that nearly three-fifths of the objects were smaller than a pin head. Most of the particles were said to be traveling faster than a hand-thrown object when the accident occurred. Contact with chemicals caused one-fifth of the injuries. Other accidents were caused by objects swinging from a fixed or attached position, like tree limbs, ropes, chains, or tools which were pulled into the eye while the worker was using them.

*How can eye injuries be prevented?*

1. Always wear your eye protection. OSHA standards require that employers provide workers with suitable eye protection. To be effective, the eyewear must be of the appropriate type for the hazard encountered and properly fitted. For example, 94% of the injuries to workers wearing eye protection resulted from objects or chemicals going around or under the protector. Eye protective devices should allow for air to circulate between the eye and the lens. Only 13 workers injured while wearing eye protection reported breakage. More than 50% of workers injured while wearing eye protection thought the eyewear had minimized their injuries.

*Remember also to wear eye protection when performing work around your home.*

2. Properly maintain your eye protection devices. Scratched and dirty devices reduce vision, cause glare and may contribute to accidents. When eye protection becomes worn, replace it. It is estimated that 90% of eye injuries can be prevented through the use of proper protective eyewear. That is our goal and, by working together, OSHA, employers, workers, and health organizations can make it happen.

*This Toolbox Talk provides general guidelines for voluntary use by employers and is not intended to provide all necessary safety information and precautions for specific workplace operations and situations. The American Supply Association assumes no responsibility or liability for the use of the information provided.*

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