

FOOT PROTECTION

The foot is a valuable part of your body which may be subjected to injury in industry. Because of potential hazards in the workplace, it is important that you discuss with your supervisor the safety shoe, boot, or other protective equipment that you need for your protection and that is required by your employer. Protective footwear is essential to ensure safe and healthy feet. Safety shoes and boots protect your feet, help prevent injuries to them, and reduce the severity of injuries that do occur in the workplace.

There are several factors that determine what type of footwear is appropriate for you. Factors to consider in selection of a shoe includes (1) job activity; (2) equipment handled; (3) potential hazards present in the workplace; and (4) requirements for the position.

What's your type? There are several types of safety boots made for workers operating under specific conditions:

- ☐ High-cut: protect feet and ankles from sparks, molten metals and chemicals;
- ☐ Steel toe, reinforced safety toe or reinforced toecap: cushion feet in case of contact with heavy materials;
- ☐ Reinforced metal soles: protect feet against punctures from nails, screws or scrap metal;
- ☐ Steel mid-soles: protect feet against puncture from sharp objects;
- ☐ Non-slip soles (rubber or wooden): protects from slipping on wet surfaces, snow or ice;
- ☐ Insulated footwear: protect feet against extremely cold temperatures;
- ☐ Metal-free footwear: worn when working around electricity;
- ☐ Treated footwear: protect against chemicals.

The right fit for you. In addition to safety, you also want comfort. When making a selection:

- ☐ Walk around to ensure comfort;
- ☐ Examine toe room – there should be one-half to one inch from the big toe to the front of the shoe. Make sure you try the shoe on with your heavy work socks or arch supports in place;
- ☐ When laced completely, the boot should fit snugly around the heel and ankle.

Keep them like new. To get the most out of your safety footwear, immediately after purchase, apply a water-resistant protective coating, and regularly check for wear and tear to ensure your feet are always fully protected. In addition to wearing protective footwear, there are other areas where you can develop safe habits to protect your feet both on and off the job. These include:

- ☐ Be aware of the hazards of your job and the proper protective measures to take.
- ☐ Don't take chances or unnecessary risks. Take time to do your job right.
- ☐ Be alert. Watch for hidden hazards.
- ☐ Be considerate. Watch out for other workers' safety.
- ☐ Follow the rules. Don't cut corners. Use your equipment as specified.
- ☐ Concentrate on the job. Inattention can lead to accidents.
- ☐ Pace yourself. Work steadily at a comfortable speed.
- ☐ Keep your work area, including the floor, clean and your tools in their place.
- ☐ Wear protective footwear when using lawnmowers, chain-saws, and moving heavy objects
- ☐ Prevent foot problems by visiting your podiatrist as part of your annual health check-up.

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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