

Weekly Safety Tip

ARE YOUR EYES PROTECTED?



According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), thousands of people are blinded each year from work related eye injuries. Nearly 60% of those injuries occurred to workers who were not wearing the proper eye and face protection. In fact, not wearing the proper Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to protect your eyes is like throwing darts with your eyes as the intended target. Would you actually do this? I don't think so!

Just as employers are required to provide the eye protection that complies with American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, employees have the responsibility to wear and maintain that PPE. The five main hazard categories are listed below and each condition or operation needs to be assessed to determine the type of eye protection required for that job or task.

Impact. Grinding, sawing, drilling, sanding, wood working, and masonry work are only a few of the common operations that create flying particles, chips, dust, and dirt that cause many eye injuries. ANSI Z87+ safety glasses, goggles, and face shields are frequently used to provide impact protection. Remember that face shields alone do not provide impact protection and should be worn in combination with safety glasses or goggles.

Heat. Furnaces that melt glass or steel, casting operations, and welding operations all produce extreme heat that require protection for the eyes and face. Heat reflective face shields along with safety glasses or goggles are the minimum requirements for eye and face protection.

Chemicals. The handling of chemicals requires a careful assessment of PPE requirements that will provide the proper eye protection for the potential hazards from splashes, fumes, vapors, and irritating mists. Protection from Blood Borne Pathogens (BBP) falls under this category. Safety goggles should be used to protect the eyes and surrounding areas while face shields will help protect the other face areas.

Dust. Woodworking and many manufacturing operations generate harmful dust that has the potential to damage your eyes. Safety glasses along with billed caps may provide adequate eye protection for light dust conditions, however goggles should be used for high dust areas.

Optical Radiation. PPE to protect eyes from the intense light generated by welding or torch cutting operations and lasers, require that the degree of radiant energy and the optical wave length be considered for PPE selection. Welding helmets should be used in combination with safety glasses or goggles for impact protection.