Toolbox TALKS

Eye Protection

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statics, each year almost 20,000 employees injure their eyes at work resulting in days away from work. Injuries can range from minor eye strain, to permanent damage up to and including blindness.

Wearing the right eye protection to protect you from potential hazards is critical. So how do you know when you should wear eye protection and what type you need?

The risk of eye injury and the need for preventive measures depend on your job and the conditions in your workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) eye and face protection standard, 29 CFR 1910.133, requires the use of eye and face protection when workers are exposed to eye or face hazards such as flying objects, molten metal, liquid chemicals, acids or caustic liquids, chemical gases or vapors, or potentially injurious light radiation – or any combination of these hazards.

Eye protection must meet certain criteria which are set forth by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). To tell if your eye protection does, it will bear a "Z87" marking for basic impact or "Z87+" marking for high impact. For other hazards such as welding or other types of light radiation, it may also have other markings such as W# - welding plus a shade number, U# - ultraviolet plus the scale number, R# - infrared light plus the scale #, L# - visible light filter plus the scale number.

Most prescription glasses do not meet the ANSI Z87.1 requirements for eye and face protection. If you wear corrective glasses, you can purchase safety glasses that are designed to be worn over your eyeglasses or you can purchase ANSI-rated prescription safety glasses.

The type of eye protection you need must be based on the hazards present in your specific workplace. Here are some examples to make your selection process a bit easier:

Hazard Type	Example of Hazard	Types of Eye Protection
Impact	Flying objects such as large chips, fragments, particles, sand, and dirt	Safety glasses with side shields; safety googles; face shield with safety glasses or goggles if the entire face needs to be protected
Heat	Anything emitting extreme heat	Safety glasses with side shields used with a heat-reflective face shield; goggles used with a heat-reflective face shield
Chemicals	Splash, fumes, vapors, and irritating mists	Safety goggles; or safety googles with a face shield if working with highly hazardous chemicals
Dust	Harmful dust	Safety goggles or safety glasses with side shields
Optical Radiation	Radiant energy, glare, and intense light	For lasers – determine the maximum intensity of the laser hazard and select safety laser glasses or goggles for the intensity
		Welding – clear safety glasses with a welding helmet that has the appropriate filter lens; or face shield with the appropriate shade welding goggles

Employers can also take several steps to reduce the risk of eye and face injury in the workplace by:

1. conducting an eye hazard assessment
2. eliminating or reducing all eye hazards where possible
3. providing the appropriate safety eye protection for the types of hazards in the workplace
4. requiring employees to wear safety eye protection when in hazardous situations
5. keeping other workers out of work areas or behind protective barriers
6. using high-visibility caution warnings to identify potential hazards such as protruding and hanging objects
7. posting first aid and emergency instructions and providing a sterile emergency eyewash solution/station in or near the work area and training your employees on how to properly use it

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In addition, employees can also take several steps to prevent injury by:

1. always wearing the proper eye protection for the hazard
2. making sure that your eye protection properly fits
3. keeping your eye protection clean and in good condition

What should be done in the event of an eye emergency?

Always seek medical attention as soon as possible for any eye injury, especially if you have eye pain, blurred vision, or vision loss. Here are some simple first aid steps that can be taken until medical assistance can be obtained:

1. If you get chemicals in your eye, immediately flush with water for at least 15 minutes.
2. For cuts or punctures to the eye or eyelid, do not wash the eye out and do not attempt to remove the object stuck in the eye. Cover the eye with a rigid shield such as a paper cup.
3. If you get particles in the eye, do not rub the eye. Try to irrigate the eye with sterile eye wash solution to flush it out. If the particle does not wash out, keep the eye closed, and bandage it lightly.
4. For a blow to the eye, gently apply a cold compress without putting pressure on the eye.

Source:

Occupational Safety and Health Administration: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/portable.html

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Date of Safety Talk _____ **Company** _____

Talk given by _____ **Signature** _____

Attending Employees:

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Notes: _____

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