

## **Tips For Preventing Eye Injuries In The Workplace**

The sense of sight is considered by some to be the most complex and important of the five senses. Naturally, we have many features that protect our eyes. Our eyebrows can prevent substances from running into our eyes. Eyelashes keep our eyes clean and protected from dirt, dust, and other particles that could collect there, as well as assist in protecting our eyes from the sun's and other light's damaging glare. Eyelids sweep particles from the surface of the eye and our tears provide liquid that constantly bathes the front of the eye, keeping it clean and moist.

For many in the workplace, one simply cannot rely on natural features to prevent injuries to the eyes. This is most evident in welding activities, use of tools, exposure to chemicals, use of powered equipment, and many other activities that pose a risk to eye injuries in the workplace. To assist in preventing eye injuries in the workplace, organizations should consider the following tips to prevent and reduce workplace hazards and tasks that could create eye injuries:

- Ensure safety eyewear/goggles are “ANSI Z87” approved and utilized at all times when eye hazards are present;
- Ensure eyewash stations and their placement is in compliance with “ANSI Z358.1-2004” guidelines. These guidelines offer critical guidance for the proper use, design, performance, maintenance, and installation of eyewash stations;
- Make certain all employees are oriented to the location of the nearest eyewash station and are trained on the proper use of an eye wash station;
- Inspect work areas and work tasks to identify areas and operations that could present eye hazards;
- Consider establishing a mandatory safety program that requires all employees to don safety eyewear/goggles in work areas and work tasks that could present eye hazards;
- Provide continuing education and orientation training to all employees regarding eye safety in the workplace and acceptable practices for preventing eye injuries in the workplace;
- Inspect eyewash stations periodically for accessibility, activation ability, and needed cleaning;
- Ensure that management is setting a good example by following adopted eye safety programs and wearing protective eyewear/goggles in work areas requiring such protection;
- Continually review your eye safety programs, policies, and procedures for applicable changes. If change is needed, ensure that changes are formally communicated and trained to those affected.

Workplace injury data indicates that the following occupations are frequently prone to producing eye injuries in the workplace:

- Welders
- Construction laborers
- Laborers
- Production workers
- Carpenters
- Janitors and cleaners
- Automotive service technicians and mechanics
- Maintenance and repair workers
- Landscaping and Grounds keeping workers

If your organization has these types of occupations or other tasks that could put employees at risks for eye injuries, I would encourage you to evaluate your efforts to prevent eye hazards and eye injuries in the workplace. Perhaps using these tips can assist in this process and in ensuring that an employee's sense of sight is not lost or compromised due to a preventable workplace incident.

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#### **References:**

**U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics**  
**U.S. Product Safety Commission**  
**American National Standards Institute**