Eye Injuries and Prevention Fatality Report

In the early 1990s, Troy Bridgeman worked for Hammond Power Solutions on Southgate Drive.

He was a shop steward and a member of the health and safety committee.

The company had recently introduced a rule requiring everyone on the shop floor to wear safety glasses. It is a standard policy in most manufacturing facilities today, but back then it was met with some resistance. People argued the glasses were uncomfortable and unflattering and that wearing them all the time, even when they weren’t brazing or doing some other potentially eye-threatening activity, was unnecessary.

As a committee member, he was obligated to help implement the policy.

The health and safety manager was always looking for ways to make the workplace safer.

He called a meeting with all the employees to shared a story about a personal experience he had regarding eye safety. He told us that he wore safety glasses whenever he did yard work around his home.

One day, he was mowing his lawn and, sure enough, his neighbor started making fun of his glasses. He tried to ignore him and carried on mowing the lawn until he heard his neighbor groan in agony. The blade from the lawnmower struck a stone, shattering it and sending shards in all directions. One of the fragments hit his neighbor directly in the eye and nearly blinded him.

The manager told the story with grave seriousness.

Perhaps it was the irony of laughing at his neighbor’s misfortune during a serious company meeting. He tried to suppress the laughter, the stronger it came bubbling to the surface.

The health and safety manager were not impressed and centered him out.

He finally asked him if he found something funny about the story.

“No,” he responded, summoning every bit of will power to stop laughing.

It wasn’t the first or only time his sense of humor got him in trouble, but it is the first time it came back to bite him years later.

He had a large hedge separating his yard from his neighbors on both sides. Twice a year he rented an industrial hedge trimmer to cut it back.

He had never worn safety glasses while cutting the hedge, but this year decided to do so. However, when he couldn’t find a pair in the house, after a short search, he carried on without them. After all, he never got injured trimming the hedge before.

Within minutes a rogue piece of shrub shrapnel hit him directly in the white of my right eye, cutting it so bad it bled.

The pain was excruciating and he feared he might have caused permanent damage. Luckily, he didn’t, but did manage to find a pair of glasses after that.

Most of his friends laughed when he told them the story and asked why he wasn’t wearing safety glasses.

He is embarrassed to admit it took 20 years and the threat of losing an eye to learn that valuable lesson.