Eye Injuries and Prevention Meeting Kit

Our eyes are one of our greatest assets. They are susceptible to all kinds of injuries in the workplace if they are not properly protected.

Many hazards to eyes on the worksite cannot be fully eliminated so proper eye protection is critical.

COMMON HAZARDS ON THE JOB THAT CAUSE EYE INJURIES

- You can receive burns to your eyes by being splashed or sprayed with organic solvents, certain metals and acidic or alkaline substances.
- Particles, dust and chips can penetrate your eyes.
- Your eyes can be punctured by sharp objects and splinters or struck by blunt objects.
- Extreme heat, chemical or gaseous fumes or mists in the air can damage eyes.
- Eye injuries can occur from exposure to ultraviolet light, infrared rays, ionizing radiation, microwaves and lasers.

EYE PROTECTION AND THE PURPOSES

Safety Glasses – The heavy lenses of safety glasses offer protection from flying particles, as they can withstand the shock of impact. However, these do not protect debris from accessing the eye around and behind the lens. If you require prescription glasses, it is advised to wear impact resistant lenses.

Safety Goggles – Fitted with the same heavy lens, these offer more protection from side impact. It is recommended you wear safety goggles when working with chemicals, striking hardened metal tools and surfaces, and working with wood.

Face Shields – These can be found with impact resistant shields,

but they are most often used to protect the face against splashing, dust, and chaff. Wear a pair of safety glasses or goggles underneath the shield if you suspect the risk of flying particles.

Sunglasses – Wear sunglasses when working in the sun. It is not just chemicals or flying debris that causes damage to the eyes. The dangers of UV rays can be just as severe as those caused by working with tools and chemicals.

Welding Helmets – These are made specifically to protect the individual from the multiple dangers of welding. Welders must be protected from not only the splatter of molten metal and slag, but the damaging rays of the welding arc. The helmets are equipped with a coloured lens to ensure protection from the light. It is important to consult your welder's instruction manual, as there are specific shades for the different levels of currents used.

10 WAYS TO PREVENT AN EYE INJURY IN YOUR WORKPLACE.

ASSESS! Inspect all work areas, access routes, and equipment for hazards to eyes. Study eye accident and injury reports. Identify operations and areas that present eye hazards.

TEST! Provide vision testing during routine employee physical exams.

PROTECT! Select protective eyewear that is designed for the specific duty or hazard.

PARTICIPATE! Create a 100 percent mandatory program for eye protection in all operation areas of your plant.

FIT! Have eyewear fitted by an eye care professional or someone trained to do this.

PLAN FOR AN EMERGENCY! Have eyewash stations that are easy to get to, especially where chemicals are used. Train workers in basic first-aid and identify those with more advanced training.

EDUCATE! Conduct educational programs to highlight the need for protective eyewear.

SUPPORT! Management support is key to having a successful eye safety program. Management can show their support for the program by wearing protective eyewear whenever and wherever needed.

REVIEW! Regularly review and update your accident prevention policies.

PUT IT IN WRITING! Once your safety program is created, put it in writing.

AVOID INJURIES TO EYES BY BEST PRACTICES

- Identify all of the potential eye hazards in your work area and for your specific work tasks. Ensure there are proper safeguards in place to prevent an eye injury.
- Eliminate or lessen the chance of getting something into your eye by avoiding being in the line of fire. One quick example is standing upwind of debris or dust blowing around the work area.
- Always wear approved safety glasses, face shield, or goggles when needed. The type of PPE needed will depend on the work task. Three out of every five victims of eye injuries on the job were not wearing any eye protection.
- If there is welding activities going on, wear proper eye protection and ensure there is a protective barrier in place to protect other employees in the area from UV exposure.
- If you get something in your eye do not rub or scratch it. Rubbing the eye can cause scratching of the cornea resulting in injury. Find an eye wash station or saline bottle to rinse out the object.
- If you get a chemical in your eyes, remove your contacts if there is any in and begin to rinse your eyes out.

Workers experience eye injuries on the job for two major reasons:

- They were not wearing eye protection.
- They were wearing the wrong kind of protection for the job.

There are four things you can do to protect your eyes from injury:

- Know the eye safety dangers at your work.
- Eliminate hazards before starting work by using machine guards, work screens or other engineering controls.
- Use proper eye protection.
- Keep your safety eyewear in good condition and have it replaced if it becomes damaged.

FINAL WORD

The loss of vision will rob you of enjoying the beauty and memories created by a lifetime of vision. Do not jeopardize yours or another’s sight by neglecting to be diligent. It only takes a second to throw on the eye protection necessary for the task at hand, be sure not to skip it.