First Aid for Eye Injuries

The chance or severity of an eye injury can be reduced when workers recognize possible eye hazards, are trained to correctly use and care for eye protection equipment, and if they know what first aid to administer in the event of an eye injury.

Warning signs should be posted near any work area, machine, equipment or process area that requires industrial-quality eye protection. To assure optimum eye protection, the appropriate protective equipment should be selected – safety glasses, goggles, face shield, or helmet – and must meet Occupational Safety and

Health Administration (OSHA) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) requirements. Personal prescription eyeglasses should only be worn in conjunction with OSHA/ANSI-approved eye protection equipment.

Below are basic first aid instructions for common eye injuries.

Foreign Particles such as dust, dirt, metal or wood chips, and even an eyelash can cause eye abrasion and damage.

Lift upper eyelid outward and down over the lower lid to remove the particle or let tears wash the particle out. If neither action removes the particle, keep the eye bandaged loosely to stop eye movement then seek professional medical treatment.

DO NOT RUB THE EYE

Chemical Contact from solvents, paints, hot liquids, or other hazardous solutions can cause serious eye pain and damage.

Go immediately to the nearest emergency shower or water source. Hold the eye open as wide as possible with fingers and look directly into the stream of water. If a contact lens is in the eye, begin flushing over the lens immediately.

This may wash away the lens. Flush the eye continuously and gently for at least 15 minutes then seek professional medical treatment.

DO NOT BANDAGE THE EYE.

DO NOT USE AN EYE CUP.

CUTS AND PUNCTURES TO THE EYE OR EYELID

Cover the eye with a rigid shield without applying pressure to stop eye movement (the bottom half of a paper cup can be used), then seek professional medical treatment.

DO NOT WASH THE EYE WITH WATER OR OTHER LIQUID.

DO NOT RUB/PRESS/REMOVE THE EMBEDDED OBJECT.

Bumps and Blows can result in eye pain and swelling. Apply a cold compress for at least 15 minutes without putting pressure on the eye. Crushed ice in a plastic bag can be taped to the forehead to rest gently on the injured eye. If experiencing continued pain, reduced vision, or discoloration (black eye) which could indicate internal eye damage, seek professional medical treatment.

Light Burns from exposure to welding, laser, or other radiant light may not be felt until hours later when the eyes begin to feel gritty or become red, swollen, and sensitive to light. Keep eyes closed and seek professional medical treatment.

Nothing can replace the loss of sight. Workers can protect their eyes and preserve their eyesight by wearing and caring for appropriate, approved protective eyewear and following proper first aid procedures when an eye injury occurs.