

Hazards and Eye Protection on the Farm Fatality File

Tragedy Inspires Prevention

Barry Weatherall worked for a plumbing and heating company in Alberta, Canada more than 15 years ago. Today he spends his time telling his story to thousands of industrial workers across Canada, on how he lost his eyesight. In the hopes of inspiring change in the common “it-won’t-happen-to-me” attitude, he leads 90-minute interactive workshops on eye safety in the workplace. Weatherall’s life-altering story starts after he was on the job and received incorrect information from a chemical company about the risk involved in neutralizing sulfuric acid with another chemical called caustic soda bead.

Weatherall was wearing personal protective equipment, including safety glasses, a face mask, and gloves while performing his work. After he finished neutralizing the chemicals and believed that there was no longer a risk of explosion he left to remove his PPE. His life changed forever when he went back to check on the chemicals, without putting his PPE back on. A chemical explosion occurred which left Weatherall permanently blind. Eye contact with chemicals make up 20 percent of eye injuries. Flying particles, a combination of flying or falling objects or sparks striking the eye, account for 70 percent of total injuries. “Companies can train people until they’re blue in the face, but once the worker is on the job-site by himself, it’s up to that worker to take the time to be safe” he said. The program’s intention is to provide workers with an intense and entirely new perspective on eye safety.