PPE-Eyes Safety Checklist

PREAMBLE

There are important steps that industry can take to protect the eyes of its workers.

The first step is to assess work areas for accidents that can be caused by impact, heat, chemicals, dust, glare and optical radiation. The second is to have a good, sound safety program in place that mandates that 100 percent of employees, managers and visitors follow eye safety rules.

Each day about 2000 U.S. workers sustain a job-related eye injury that requires medical treatment. About one third of the injuries are treated in hospital emergency departments, and more than 100 of these injuries result in one or more days away from work.

Eye Injuries Happen to Workers

- **Striking or scraping:** The majority of eye injuries result from small particles or objects striking or scraping the eye, such as: dust, cement chips, metal slivers, and wood chips. These materials are often ejected by tools, windblown, or fall from above a worker. Large objects may also strike the eye or face, or a worker may run into an object causing blunt-force trauma to the eyeball or eye socket.
- **Penetration:** Objects like nails, staples, or slivers of wood or metal can go through the eyeball and result in a permanent loss of vision.
- **Chemical and thermal burns:** Industrial chemicals or cleaning products are common causes of chemical burns to one or both eyes. Thermal burns to the eye also occur, often among welders. These burns routinely damage workers’ eyes and surrounding tissue.

Workers Acquire Eye Diseases

Eye diseases are often transmitted through the mucous membranes of the eye as a result of direct exposure to things like blood splashes, and droplets from coughing or sneezing or from touching the eyes with a contaminated finger or object. Eye diseases can result in minor reddening or soreness of the eye or in a life threatening disease such as HIV, hepatitis B virus, or avian influenza.

Eyes are always at risk of exposure to different hazards that may include contact with dust, metal particles, debris, glass particles, gas, chemicals, blood borne pathogens and thermal hazards. Exposure to these hazards may lead to the development of adverse illness that affect eyesight which can include eyeball lacerations, affectations to the cornea such as corneal abrasions, conjunctivitis, and burns. Eye protection is vital to provide an appropriate response and assure health and safety of emergency response and recovery workers.

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