PPE – Legs-Feet Stats and Facts

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports at least 60,000 foot injuries are responsible for keeping people from work every year. The average cost of one of those lost workdays is $9,600, and 80 percent of foot injuries are caused by objects that weigh 30 pounds or less.

Foot and leg injuries can result in permanent disabilities, such as partial or complete loss of walking ability. This impacts how or if the employee can do his or her job even after returning to work.

Any occupation can result in a foot injury, including a desk job. However, some employees are more at risk than others. Common risky workplaces include:

Construction

This is considered one of the most dangerous occupations in the world. Hazards are everywhere and range from falling objects to heavy or unsafe equipment. Construction workers can also sustain foot injuries from climbing ladders or scaffolding. Those who do not wear proper safety equipment or secure their tools and machines are particularly at risk.

Transportation

Truckers, bus drivers, and other members of the transportation industry are at risk for a variety of reasons. These include heavy lifting, climbing in and out of high vehicles, and driving for long periods. Sitting still too long can weaken the foot muscles, increasing risk of strains and sprains. Additionally, many transportations workers smoke, which can lead to peripheral vascular disease, Buerger’s disease, and other conditions.

Food and retail

People who work in these industries can be required to stand up to 12 hours a day. This leads to blisters, dry feet, and sometimes bruised toenails. It can also exacerbate sweat, bacteria, and foot odor.

Fitness, dancing, and similar occupations

The vigorous exercise puts these workers at risk for the above injuries and possible broken bones.

Preventing foot injury at work

Occupational health organizations such as OSHA have several recommendations for preventing foot injuries. First, wear sturdy footwear that provides plenty of arch support, especially if you work on unstable terrain. Make sure your shoes fit properly, and do not wear heels or pointed shoes.

Rest your feet when and where possible. Do not climb in unsafe areas. Do not smoke, and treat foot injuries that do occur, such as blisters, with proper first aid.

OSHA Estimates totals for foot and hand types of injuries annually at 320,000 hand and finger injuries, 70,000 eye injuries, 70,000 head and face injuries, and 110,000 foot and toe injuries in 1987. Close to 30% of the total injury base. Sharp or heavy falling objects are the primary sources of foot injuries. So how does one go about avoiding workplace hazards for feet and hands?

To help you get started we have listed out some of the common injuries and actions that lead to workplace injuries of the hand and foot. This is by no means complete as there certainly could be burns or lacerations or multiple levels of sprains/strains in either body area in addition to those noted.

Foot Injuries

One’s feet provide support and movement. Yet, the 26 bones in the human foot can be easily damaged. According to the BLS, 40 laborers suffer disabling injuries to their feet and toes every day. These injuries account for 8.5 percent of all lost-time

injuries in the construction industry.

- **Compression**– when foot or toe is squeezed between two objects
- **Puncture**– when a sharp object like a nail, penetrates the shoe
- **Slipping**– loss of traction due to oil, water or chemicals
- **Chemicals/Solvents**– may penetrate ordinary safety shoes and can harm feet
- **Temperature Extremes**– insulated boots may be necessary, depending on climate
- **Wetness**– extended exposure to water may result in discomfort and possible infection
- **Electricity**– a danger when using power tools or electric equipment

Some of the most common foot and leg injuries include:

- **Fractures**– A fracture of the bones in the leg, foot, or knee may be caused by falling objects or an accidental fall from a height. Some fractures can be treated by using a lightweight cast and crutches, while more serious fractures may require surgery and extensive physical therapy.
- **Knee Tendonitis**– Knee Tendonitis is a swelling of the tendons surrounding the knee. Individuals who spend a lot of time walking, standing, or lifting objects while at work are at risk of developing this painful condition. Older individuals are, particularly at risk.
- **Knee Bursitis**– Knee Bursitis is a swelling of a fluid sac that provides cushioning for your knee joint. Like tendonitis, bursitis can cause severe pain, inflammation, and loss of mobility.
- **Loss of Limb** – The most serious workplace accidents may require amputation. These life-altering accidents can have devastating effects on an individual’s quality of life and ability to work. Amputation cases are especially complicated because they involve issues of retraining, prosthetic replacement, wound care, and home modification. Leg and foot

injuries can be among the most devastating for an individual to sustain as well as the most difficult to overcome. Using crutches or a wheelchair can severely limit a person’s mobility, and make it difficult to complete, let alone enjoy, everyday activities at work, at home, and in the community. Leg and foot injuries can also make it very difficult, if not impossible, to return to one’s pre-injury employment. Individuals who perform manual labor rely on the use of their legs and feet to perform nearly every aspect of their jobs. Furthermore, many workplaces are also not properly equipped for individuals with limited mobility.