Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 43 – October 21-25, 2019

Eye Safety

Eye injuries in the workplace are very common. More than 2,000 eye injuries occur at work each day and about 40% of these take place in the construction, manufacturing, and mining industries. About 1 in 10 injuries result in missed workdays. Of the total amount of work-related injuries, 10-20% cause temporary or permanent vision loss. In addition, eye injuries suffered at work cost more than $300 million per year in lost productivity, treatment, and compensation.

Experts believe that the right eye protection can lessen the severity or even prevent 90% of accidental eye injuries.

This week, we will identify the common causes of workplace eye injuries. We will also identify the types of safety eyewear, establish the differences between lenses, and learn 10 ways you can prevent eye injuries at home and on the job.

Monday – Common Causes of Workplace Eye Injuries

It takes only a few seconds to protect yourself from eye-related injuries that can cause potentially permanent vision problems. Be sure to incorporate eye wellness into your daily routine. Maybe it's as simple as adjusting the brightness setting on your computer monitor or wearing the appropriate eye protection to safeguard your vision from flying metal shards.

Some common causes for eye injuries are:

- Flying objects (bits of metal, glass, rocks, wood splinters, etc.)
- Particles (dust, sand, wood, fiberglass, etc.)
- Tools
- Chemicals
- Harmful radiation
- Any combination of these or other hazards

Tuesday – Preventing At Home Eye Injuries

In the workplace, it's easier to remember to wear your protective equipment when you see others doing the same. When you work alone at home, you have to remind yourself.

Depending on the task at hand, there are multiple ways you can prevent eye injuries. However, before you start working on a project, remember to go through a safety checklist: Am I wearing the appropriate protective equipment? Do I have the right tools for the project? Can I handle this project on my own or do I need help?

After going through the checklist, you can begin working. Here are some safety tips to keep in mind as you DIY home projects, work in the yard, or cook and clean!

During DIY home improvement and repair projects

- Wear protective eyewear during risky activities. Wear safety glasses with side shields anytime you might be exposed to flying particles, objects, or dust.
- Wear goggles when exposed to chemicals. Even if you'll only encounter them for a few seconds here and there, it's better to take caution. For example, washing siding or decks, or painting interior with non-water based paint.
- Supervise your child's use of tools when they help with DIY projects or work on craft projects. Pencils, scissors, forks, and knives can all cause serious eye injuries. Keep in mind that common household items (such as paper clips, bungee cords, wire coat hangers, rubber bands, and fishhooks) also can be dangerous.

In the yard

- Protect your eyes while doing yard work. Use protective eyewear every time you operate lawnmowers, trimmers, and leaf blowers.
- Keep children away from flying debris. Make sure young children stay out of the yard while a lawnmower is in use.
- Store hazardous substances out of reach. Keep liquid fertilizers, pesticides and pool chemicals away from children at all times. When using these chemicals with sprayers, wear goggles.

Cooking and cleaning

- Use caution with chemicals and cleaners. Carefully read the labels of chemicals and household cleaning supplies, such as bleach, before using them. Don't mix products. Keep all chemicals and sprays out of a child's reach. When using chemicals to clean anything above your head, wear goggles.
- Be careful when cooking or using hot objects. Use grease shields to prevent the splattering of hot grease or oil.
- Keep sharp kitchen tools and utensils away from small children. Store them in child-proof locations and avoid setting them down within reach of young children.

Wednesday – Types of Safety Eyewear

The type of safety eye protection you wear depends on your workplace hazards and job tasks. If you are working in an area that has dust, particles, or flying objects in the air, you must at least wear safety glasses with side protection (side shields). If you are working with chemicals, you should always wear goggles. If you are working near hazardous radiation (welding, lasers, or fiber optics) you must use special-purpose safety glasses, goggles, face shields, or helmets designed for that task.

There are many types of safety eyewear available depending on the task at hand. Safety eyewear protection includes:

- Non-prescription and prescription safety glasses
- Goggles
- Face shields
- Welding helmets

- Full-face respirators

Thursday – Different types of Safety Lenses

Just as there are different types of safety glasses, there are also different types of lenses. The lens you use largely depends on what you are doing. There are three types of safety lenses: glass, plastic, and polycarbonate. All of these lenses meet or exceed the requirements for protecting your eyes.

Glass lenses are not easily scratched and protect against harsh chemicals. You can order glass lenses in your corrective prescription. However, eye protection with glass lenses can feel heavy and uncomfortable.

Plastic lenses are much more lightweight than glass lenses. Plastic lenses protect against welding splatter and are unlikely to fog, but they are not as scratch-resistant as glass lenses.

Polycarbonate lenses are much stronger and impact resistant than glass and plastic. Similar to plastic, polycarbonate lenses are lightweight, unlikely to fog, and protect against welding splatter, but they are less scratch resistant than glass lenses.

Friday – Ten Ways to Prevent Eye Injuries

Here are 10 ways you can prevent eye injuries from occurring in your workplace:

1. **Assess**: Look carefully at plant operations. Inspect all work areas, access routes, and equipment for potential hazards. Study eye accident and injury reports. Identify operations and areas that present hazards in the future.
2. **Test:** Uncorrected vision problems can cause serious accidents. Conduct vision testing during routine employee physical exams.
3. **Protect:** Select protective eyewear that is designed for the specific duty or hazard. Protective eyewear must meet the current standards set by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 and later revisions.
4. **Participate:** Create a mandatory program for eye protection in all operation areas of your plant. A broad program prevents more injuries and is easier to enforce than one that limits eye protection to certain departments, areas, and jobs.
5. **Fit:** Workers need protective eyewear that fits well and comfortably. Have eyewear fitted by an eye care professional. Provide repairs for eyewear and require each worker to keep track of his or her own gear.
6. **Plan for an Emergency:** Set up first-aid procedures for eye injuries. Have clean eyewash stations that are easy to get to, especially in areas where dust is present or chemicals are frequently used. Train a team of workers in basic first-aid and identify those with more advanced training.
7. **Educate:** Conduct ongoing education programs to remind all employees about the need for eye protection and the options for protective eyewear. Add eye safety requirements to new employee orientation materials.

8. **Support:** Management support is key to creating a successful eye safety program. Management can show their support for the program by wearing protective eyewear whenever and wherever needed.
9. **Review:** Regularly review and update your accident prevention policies. Remember, the goal is NO eye injuries or accidents! Investigate first aid and near miss reports thoroughly.
10. **Put it in Writing:** Once your safety program is created, put it in writing. Display a copy of the policy in work and employee gathering areas. Include a review of the policy in employee orientation materials.

Discussion: Review and explain the eye protection standards for your specific job assignment area and your facility. Has anyone suffered from or know someone who has suffered from a workplace eye injury? What about at home? Do you think this accident could have been prevented? How so?