



Keeping an Eye on Safety



The swashbuckling pirate and his eye patch have remained in our imaginations since childhood.

But losing an eye at work is not an imaginary problem.

A metal splinter puncturing an eye is enough to make anyone flinch.

Many eye injuries occur simply because employees aren't using safety eyewear.

Others were harmed when they wore the wrong kind of eye protection for the job.

Sources of Eye Injuries

- Flying particles — Almost 70 percent of all eye injuries result from flying or falling objects striking the eye
- Chemicals — Contact with chemicals (liquids, gases, dusts, fumes, or vapors) causes another 20 percent of eye injuries
- Swinging objects — Most of the remaining injuries are caused by objects that swing from an attached position. Tree limbs, ropes, chains, or tools are common examples
- Blood-borne pathogens and bodily fluids — in health care, maintenance, and housekeeping fields, there is a danger of these liquids being splashed into the eyes
- Other causes — Electrical arcs and sparks, molten metal, and radiant energy from welding, cutting, lasers, and ultraviolet and infrared light also contribute to eye injury. People tend to gear up when they know they're exposed to a hazard, but injuries also happen to people walking through an area. Someone glances over and focuses on a welder's flash, for example.



Eye Safety Checklist

Create a safe work environment

- Minimize hazards from falling or unstable debris
- Make sure that tools work and safety features (machine guards) are in place
- Make sure that workers (particularly volunteers) know how to use tools properly
- Keep bystanders out of the hazard area

Evaluate safety hazards

- Identify the primary hazards at the site
- Identify hazards posed by nearby workers, large machinery, and falling/shifting material/objects

Wear the proper eye and face protection

- Select the appropriate eye protection for the hazard
- Make sure the eye protection is in good condition
- Make sure the eye protection fits and will stay in place

Use good work practices

- Caution—Brush, shake, or vacuum dust and debris from hardhats, hair, forehead, or the top of the eye protection before removing the protection
- Do not rub eyes with dirty hands or clothing
- Clean eyewear regularly

Making It Fit

- Protective eyewear should fit comfortably, but securely
- Goggles should fit with the center of the lens in front of the eyes
- Adjust straps so goggles fit snugly against the bridge of the nose and place them low on the back of the head for good fit
- Spectacle sidepieces should touch the side of the head and curl behind the ears

