

OSHA Standard: 1910.133 Eye and Face Protection

Eye injuries of all types occur at a rate of more than 1,000 per day. Each year some 100,000 of these will be disabling because of temporary or permanent vision loss. A recent survey by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that three out of five workers who suffered an eye injury wore no protection. And, of those who did, 40 percent wore the wrong kind. You should wear safety eyewear whenever there is any chance that machines or operations present the hazard of flying objects, chemicals, harmful radiation or a combination of these or other hazards. Anyone working in or passing through areas that pose eye hazards should wear appropriate protective eyewear at such times. Experts believe that proper eye protection could have prevented or reduced the severity of injury in at least 90 percent of all accidents.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO EYE INJURIES AT WORK?

-- Not wearing eye protection. BLS reports that nearly three out of every five workers injured were not wearing eye protection at the time of the accident.

-- Wearing the wrong kind of eye protection for the job. About 40% of the injured workers were wearing some form of eye protection when the accident occurred. These workers were most likely to be wearing protective eyeglasses with no side shields, though injuries among employees wearing full-cup or flat-fold side shields occurred, as well.

WHAT CAUSES EYE INJURIES?

-- Flying particles. BLS found that almost 70% of the accidents studied resulted from flying or falling objects or sparks striking the eye. Injured workers estimated that nearly three-fifths of the objects were smaller than a pin head. Most of the particles were said to be traveling faster than a hand-thrown object when the accident occurred.

-- Contact with chemicals caused one-fifth of the injuries. Other accidents were caused by objects swinging from a fixed or attached position, like tree limbs, ropes, chains, or tools which were pulled into the eye while the worker was using them.

WHERE DO ACCIDENTS OCCUR MOST OFTEN?

-- Craft work; industrial equipment operation or service. Potential eye hazards can be found in nearly every industry, but BLS reported that more than 40% of injuries occurred among craft workers, like mechanics, repairers, carpenters, and plumbers. Over a third of the injured workers were operatives, such as assemblers, sanders, and grinding machine operators. Laborers suffered about one-fifth of the eye injuries. Almost half the injured workers were employed in manufacturing; slightly more than 20% were in construction.