



TAILGATE SAFETY

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE: EYE HAZARDS

It only takes a moment to lose something many of us take for granted, in the blink of an eye you can damage or lose your eyesight. Everyday an estimated 1,000 eye injuries occur on the job. The financial cost; over 300 million in lost production time, medical expenses, and workers' compensation, is enormous. However, no dollar amount can be placed on the personal loss these accidents take on the injured worker.

Following established safety guidelines and using the appropriate eye protection for tasks that have a risk of eye injury can prevent over 90% of eye injuries.

The following is data gathered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) regarding the major causes of eye injuries:

- Flying and Falling Objects - Almost 70% of all eye injuries are a result of objects hitting the eye. Most of these objects are smaller than a pinhead and are traveling at high speeds. Examples include: dust, dirt, metal, wood chips from activities such as chipping, grinding, sanding, scraping, sawing, hammering, or from tools, machinery
- Liquid Substances - Approximately 20% of all eye injuries are a result of a chemical exposure. Examples of chemicals that may cause serious injury to the eye upon contact are corrosives (acids and bases) and solvents. The eyes are the most absorbent part of our body. Any chemical or substance that emits fumes or vapors can cause eye irritation or injury. The handling of hot or molten materials is also a potential hazard for the eyes.
- Swinging Objects – The remaining 10% of eye injuries are a result of objects slapping the eye (swing from attached position). Examples include tree limbs, chains, ropes, bungee cords, tools (kickback) etc.
- Light – Another hazard to the eyes is radiant light. Intense light emits ultra violet radiation that can cause burns to the eyes (such as a flash burn from welding). Lasers, welding, and cutting operations are examples of job duties that may cause light related injuries to the eyes.

Often (approximately 1/3 of work-related eye injuries) eye injuries are caused by a co-worker working nearby. If a co-worker nearby is performing a task that requires eye protection, you should also wear eye protection.

'They hurt my nose,' 'They hurt my ears,' 'I can't see as well,' 'They fog up,' 'They look funny on me.' Sound familiar? Multiple excuses are used to avoid wearing protective eyewear. All of them can be addressed; Provide several choices for eyewear, provide cleaning solution for cleaning the lenses, provide anti-fogger solution, purchase "cool" looking ANSI approved protective eyewear. There are no "good enough" excuses to not wear the protection required by your company. Ask someone with a glass eye what excuse they used...and was it worth it.

Being aware of the eye hazards associated with your job or specific tasks required by your job, and wearing the appropriate eye protection is your best defense against disabling eye injuries.

Training Tips: a) Discuss specific tasks in your workplace and their hazards (ask for input from employees). b) Talk about excuses for not wearing proper gear and ask for ideas for removing those excuses. c) Ask employees if they have had an incident where eyewear prevented, or could have prevented an eye injury. d) Provide "cool" looking eyewear to remove the "goofy" factor.



North Coast Builders Exchange ~Tailgate Topics
Ph (707) 542-9502 **Fax (707) 542-2027**