

Workplace Eye Safety

Eye injuries at work are common. Every year approximately 70,000 workers injure their eyes. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reports that nearly three out of every five injured workers were not wearing eye protection at the time of their accident. Luckily, 90% of all workplace eye injuries are preventable with the use of proper safety eyewear.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provides regulations that employers and employees must follow. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) provides the following standards of eye protection for any workplace task:

- Unprotected workers will not knowingly be subjected to environmental hazards.
- Protective eyewear is required whenever there is a reasonable probability eye injury may occur.
- Employers must provide the type of eye protection best suited to the task to be performed.
- Employees are required to use the eye protectors provided.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that eye injuries in the workplace cost over \$467 million annually. A written eye safety program should be implemented in the workplace to help prevent workplace eye injuries. Employers should consider these tips in developing their safety plan:

- Determine the potential for eye injury for the tasks performed by their employees.
- Decide how best to protect against the injury (e.g., dark lenses for welding, face-shield for flying objects, tight seal for chemical spills).
- Identify the visual needs of the job (e.g., magnification, dark lenses).
- Post rules regarding when and how eye protection must be used.
- Provide adequate and readily available supplies of eye protection at all times.
- Instruct employees on appropriate treatment if injury should occur.
- Require vision screening for new employees to diagnose any eye disease.