



## Safety & Risk Office 5-Minute Safety Talk No. 10 – Protecting Your Sight

*Note to Supervisor: This 5-Minute Safety Talk (in some places, it might be called a Toolbox Talk or a Tailgate Talk) is designed not only to communicate important safety information to your employees, but also to be given to them by you, which will hopefully reinforce the message and let them know your expectations for safety. You can use the text below as a script to be rendered verbatim or just as talking points to be stated in your own words. Please also complete the attendance listing on the last page and send it to Safety & Risk, Mail Stop 66.*

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 2,000 U.S. workers each day have a job-related eye injury that requires medical treatment. Your eyesight is precious, so what can you do to ensure that you protect it?

To begin, we need to ask why these injuries are occurring.

- Three out of five eye injuries (60%!) happen because the worker was not wearing any eye protection at the time of the accident.
- Of the remaining 40% of injured workers who were wearing some type of eye protection, the protection was the wrong kind and failed to protect adequately. The leading cause in these cases was the lack of side shields.

Accident studies reveal that flying or falling objects and sparks are the cause in 70% of eye injuries, with most of the objects causing the injury being smaller than a pin head. Also, nearly 20% of all eye injuries are caused by contact with chemicals. This includes splashing or chemicals being sprayed directly into the eye. What does this tell us about how we can protect our eyesight while on the job?

The number one thing is to **always** wear appropriate eye protection in any situation where there is a risk of eye injury occurring. Operations that present eye hazards include:

- Grinding, spraying, sanding, chiseling, woodworking or any other activity that might cause large fragments or small particles to fly through the air and into the eyes.
- Painting, spraying, sanding, metalworking, spot welding or any process that may cause dust, fumes or tiny particulates to become airborne where they can contact the eyes.
- Work tasks such as electric welding and cutting with a torch or operations around radiant energy that can blind the eyes.
- Operations such as handling acids and caustics or other chemicals where splashing into the eyes can occur.

The second thing is to select eye protection that is appropriate to the task, such as:

- Use safety glasses that wrap around the eyes or have side shields wherever there is a risk of flying objects entering the eyes.
  - Make sure that the safety eyewear has “Z87+” marked on the frame or in some cases the lens. The “Z87” refers to the performance standard (ANSI Z87.1-2010) established by the American National Standards Institute for devices used to protect the eyes and face from injuries from impact, non-ionizing radiation and chemical exposure in workplaces.
  - “Z87+” means that the safety glasses are impact-rated. ANSI tests safety glasses by shooting a ¼-inch steel ball at 102 mph at the lens and dropping a 1.1 lb. pointed weight from 50 inches on the lens. If the lens breaks in either test, it will not have the “Z87+” marking. Safety glasses with just the “Z87” marking are not impact-rated.
- Wherever there is a potential exposure to the eyes from splashes of hazardous liquids, the worker should wear goggles, which form a seal around the entire eye to prevent objects from entering under or around the goggles. Goggles which are appropriate for protection from splashes/droplets will be marked with “D3” in accordance with the ANSI standard.
- If there is a risk of small particulates entering the eyes, goggles should be worn that are marked with “D4” for dust and “D5” for fine dust.
- For arc welding, wear a welding helmet with lenses that have shade numbers “W10” to “W14”.
- For gas welding or cutting, welding goggles with shade numbers “W4” to “W8” can be used.
- If you wear prescription eyewear, safety glasses and goggles are available in “Over-The-Glass” versions which allow you to wear your glasses while also wearing the eye protection.

Some other things to remember for your eye protection:

- Make sure that your eye protection fits properly and is clean. One of the leading reasons for workers removing or not wearing eye protection is that it did not fit properly. Another is that the lens became dirty and they could not see what they were doing.
- Keep your safety glasses in good shape. Lenses can scratch, which makes them difficult to see through and is another reason why they might not be worn. Store them in an old sock before they are tossed into a tool chest or the seat of a vehicle.
- If your work out in the sun for any length of time, select glasses that have ultraviolet (UV) protection.
- If something gets in your eye, use the eyewash station. Eyes should be rinsed with clean water for at least 15 – 20 minutes.
- Finally, you should get an eye exam every two years or if you perceive that your eyesight is deteriorating. Being able to see clearly is part of being safe and will help in your job performance as well. Conditions such as glaucoma can also be detected early enough for treatment during routine eye exams. Never be too proud to wear glasses if you have to.

In summary, **never** take chances with your vision. Choose the best protection, make sure it fits, keep it clean and **always wear it.**

**5-Minute Safety Talk  
No. 10 – Protecting Your Sight  
Attendance List**

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

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**Send to the Safety & Risk Office, Mail Stop # 66, when completed.**