

Eye Safety in your Workplace

YOURSAFETY@IRP - TOOLBOX DISCUSSION

Eye injuries can occur anytime & anywhere on the job – However the risk of eye injury is much greater if you:

- Are working above shoulder height or in a confined space;
- **Welding** - Among welders, their assistants, and nearby workers, UV radiation burns (welder's flash) routinely damage workers' eyes and surrounding tissue. It is important to note that the people working in the surrounding areas are exposed to this hazard and are often the ones that suffer the symptoms of light exposure. Turning your head away from the light is not a good strategy as light can still enter your eyes and cause damage;
- **Use power tools and machines** - Power tools and some machines can create lots of dust, sparks, material fragments etc. Not only for you, but for people around you. Some of these objects, such as nails, staples, or slivers of wood or metal can penetrate the eyeball and result in a permanent loss of vision;
- **Work with pressurised liquids or gas** - Thermal burns to the eye can occur due to accidental or sudden release etc;
- **Work with solvents and other chemicals** - Chemical burns to one or both eyes from splashes of industrial chemicals or cleaning products are a common workplace injury;
- **Work in windy conditions or compressed air** - Loose materials such as metal filings, dust etc can easily be blown into your eyes.

Remember: Injuries can occur simply by passing a work area or working next to someone who is performing any of the above mentioned activities. Be aware of your surroundings and the potential risks posed by simultaneous operations.

Personal protective eyewear **must be** used when an eye hazard exists and should be chosen based on the specific work situation and nature and extent of the hazard, the circumstances of exposure, other protective equipment used at the same time, and personal vision needs.

For jobs that pose a significant risk of debris entering the eye, a **risk assessment** should be undertaken to see if preventative actions can be employed to reduce or eliminate the risk.



WHAT IF I GET SOMETHING IN MY EYE?

- **DON'T RUB THE EYE** - Rinse with clean water for at least 15-20 minutes. Use an eyewash station if available, but any clean water will do.
- **REPORT THE INJURY** - Notify your supervisor and have a first aid person or doctor look at your eye.

WHAT ABOUT A CUT OR PUNCTURE?

- **DON'T** wash or touch your eye or lift the upper lid of your eye.
- **SEEK FIRST AID IMMEDIATELY.**

REMEMBER:

- Eye protection must be well maintained;
- Avoid bad habits such as rubbing your eyes with dirty hands or gloves;
- Regularly wash your hands to avoid eye contamination.