



eSafetyLine

Wearing Eye Protection at the Right Time

Everyone knows eye injuries occur all the time at work. Sources of eye injuries range from simple dust particles to molten metal from an electric arc blasts. We also know the proper eye protection can save our eyes. Of course, the proper eye protection can be safety glasses, goggles, face shields and/or welding helmets depending on the hazard. But, in many cases it's the failure to use the basic eye protection, your safety glasses that leads to injury.

There are a number of excuses you may have for not wearing them. Or you may not be aware of when the right time is to take them off. This talk will address some of these issues and provide suggestions for ensuring you wear your safety glasses when needed.

The first attempt at protecting your eyes is the use of engineering controls by your employer. Machines and tools have guards that help prevent the escape of particles. Welding curtains are used for arc flash protection. Complete protection is not always provided. These controls may signal the need for ensuring you have your safety glasses on while in these areas. Be aware of administrative controls your employer has established such as establishing areas that are "off limits" unless you have a work assignment there. If you must pass through these areas, make sure your safety glasses are on.

Eliminate excuses for removing your eyewear:

- Select safety glasses that fit properly.
Safety glasses are made in different sizes to fit different shape faces. There are all different styles. One may fit one person better than another. Select glasses with adjustable temples and eyewear retainers or straps to help hold the glasses in the proper position close to the face.
- Prevent scratches.
They tend to motivate you to remove glasses to see your work better. Polycarbonate lenses scratch easier than other lenses, but new anti-scratch coatings help if the glasses are cared for properly. Wear an eyewear retainer strap that will let the glasses hang around your neck when not in use instead of laying them down on the job. Store them in an old sock before they are tossed into a tool chest or the seat of a car or pickup. Use a glasses cleaning station or wash and wipe with a soft clean cloth (old T-shirts work fine, but the sweaty shirt that you're wearing may have as much drywall dust as your safety glasses, creating a muddy mess on the lenses by day's end)

- Prevent fogging.
Glasses that are fogged create the same problem as those that are scratched. Ask for safety glasses that have anti-fog coatings put on during manufacturing and/or use anti-fog solutions on the lenses regularly, if needed. Wear a sweat band on your forehead or a cool rag in your hard hat.

And remember; never take your glasses off while in the work area. The end of your work may not be the end of the need for protection. For example, at the end of the day, but while still on the job site—a carpenter took his glasses and tool belt off and left them on the roof at the end of the day; while climbing down the ladder he lost an eye from a coworker dropping pliers on him from above. When you are finished with a tool or specific task—but any work is going on around you, wear your glasses. If you go on break, but there are still hazards around you from other workers, wear your glasses. Only when you leave the site and are out of the hazard zone should you take your glasses off.

Discussion Questions

When do you take your safety glasses off?

What ways can you offer to increase safety eyewear use at your job site?