

10 Tips for Protecting Eyes from Injury at Work



Because May is Vision Health Month in Canada, it's a good time to focus on protecting workers' eyes and vision.

Workers' eyes are vulnerable to many hazards on the job, including dust, fumes, pieces of material flying out of equipment and splashes of hazardous substances. According to CNIB, every day, 700 Canadian workers sustain eye injuries on the job, often resulting in lost time and, in some cases, either temporary or permanent vision loss.

Here are 10 tips from Prevent Blindness, an organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight, on ways to prevent eye injuries on the job:

1. **Assess:** Look carefully at your operations. Inspect all work areas, access routes, and equipment for hazards to eyes. Study eye incident and injury reports. Identify operations, jobs and areas that present eye hazards.
2. **Test:** Uncorrected vision problems can cause incidents. Provide vision testing during routine employee physical exams.
3. **Protect:** Select protective eyewear that's designed for the specific duty or hazard. Protective eyewear must meet the current standards under the OHS laws and any incorporated standards, such as those from the CSA.
4. **Participate:** Create a 100% mandatory program for eye protection in all operation areas of your workplace. A broad program prevents more injuries and is easier to enforce than one that limits eye protection to certain departments, areas or jobs.
5. **Fit:** Workers need protective eyewear that fits well and is comfortable. Have eyewear fitted by an eye care professional or someone trained to do so.
6. **Plan for an emergency:** Set up first aid procedures for eye injuries. Have eyewash stations that are easy to get to, especially where chemicals are used. Train workers in basic first aid and identify those with more advanced training.
7. **Educate:** Conduct ongoing educational programs to create, keep up and highlight the need for protective eyewear. Add eye safety to your regular worker training programs and to new worker orientation.
8. **Support:** Management support is key to having a successful eye safety program. Management can show their support for the program by wearing

protective eyewear whenever and wherever needed.

9. **Review:** Regularly review and update your incident prevention policies. Your goal should be NO eye injuries or incidents!
10. **Put it in writing:** Once your safety program is created, put it in writing. Display a copy of the policy in work areas and where workers gather. Include a review of the policy in new worker orientation.

OHS Insider has other articles, tools and resources you can use to protect workers' eyes, including:

- How to comply with the eye protection requirements in the OHS laws
- Safety glasses toolbox talk handout
- Emergency eyewash best practices
- Model Eye and Face Protection Policy
- Tips for preventing eye strain from computer use.

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