

Spot The Safety Violation: These Boots Weren't Made for Working



Is this appropriate footwear for a bricklayer at a construction site'



There are various kinds of PPE workers may need on the job, including safety footwear. Proper shoes or boots can protect workers from slipping and falling, and their feet from suffering burns or lacerations or getting crushed. But safety footwear is only effective when it's in good condition and worn properly.

This photo from WorkSafe Victoria in Australia is of a young bricklayer who was found onsite working in these boots, which seem to be falling apart and don't have any laces. Fortunately, he was kicked off the job and told not to come back until he had appropriate footwear.

Ensure that Safety Footwear Is Properly Maintained

To avoid having workers show up in footwear such as those in the picture, ensure they properly maintain their safety footwear. Workers should:

- Regularly clean their footwear. It's also a good idea to use a protective coating to make it water-resistant. And footwear made of leather should be moisturized so it doesn't dry out and crack.
- Inspect it for damage or regular wear-and-tear, such as worn out tops that reveal the steel toes underneath, cracked soles and worn soles that don't provide sufficient traction.

Also make sure that safety footwear that's in poor condition or no longer provides adequate protection is replaced. And make sure workers wear their footwear properly, i.e., with laces that are tied.

In addition to the above, you must ensure that you comply with the requirements for safety footwear contained in your jurisdiction's OHS regulations, which usually require employers to:

Conduct safety footwear risk assessments. To protect workers from the safety hazards that could endanger their feet, conduct a risk assessment for hazards such as:

- Slip or trip and fall hazards, such as uneven terrain;
- Crushing potential;
- Extreme temperatures;
- Corrosive substances;
- Puncture hazards;
- Electrical shock; and
- Any other recognizable foot hazard.

Use this safety footwear risk assessment checklist to make sure your assessment is thorough and covers all workers who could potentially be exposed to a foot hazard.

Select appropriate safety footwear. If the assessment reveals the presence of foot hazards, select the type of safety footwear that's appropriate to protect your workers' feet from the identified hazards and ensure that workers wear such footwear.