



## Eye-Catching Eye Safety Tips

**Sit down at your desk and close your eyes.** Now keep them closed for the next 5 minutes, and try to imagine doing your job. Impossible? You betcha! That's why eye safety is such an important topic to discuss with your employees. And not just eye safety on the job, but eye safety at home and in recreational pursuits, too. It doesn't matter how or where you lose your sight—it only matters that you can't see, can't drive, and probably can't continue to do your job. And that matters a lot.

**Wake 'em up and grab their attention.** One effective technique for kicking off your eye safety training sessions is to tell employees stories about workplace eye injuries that *didn't* happen. By now most of your people have probably heard their share of bloody tales about punctured eyeballs and blinded workers. No matter how gruesome you make your stories, you may not impress your been-there-heard-that trainees. But telling them real stories about how eye protection has actually saved people's eyesight might make them sit up and take notice. Hopefully they'll think twice about going without appropriate eye protection on the job and at home. So if you have positive stories from your own workplace or experiences in other jobs, great. If you have an employee in your organization whose eye protection saved his or her sight, even better. Invite the person in to give a dramatic firsthand account. If you don't have any stories of your own, here are a couple you can use:

### "A Lucky Story of Dry Eyes"

- An employee was repairing a pipe that normally carried pressurized sulfuric acid. The worker assumed that the pipe was depressurized and the flow of acid had been shut off according to standard procedure. But as it happened, somebody messed up and failed to properly shut down the pipe. Fortunately, when the highly corrosive acid spewed out all over him, the employee was protected by goggles and a protective suit. Although he received minor burns to his face, this lucky guy walked away with his eyesight intact, thanks to his safety goggles.

### "The Case of the Staple Gone Awry"

- Another employee was using a staple gun to seal some boxes. After a while, the routine, repetitive nature of the task caused the employee to go on autopilot. And that's when the staple gun got caught on the edge of box and ended up pointing right at her face. Without thinking, she automatically pulled the trigger once more and a staple shot straight at the lens of her safety glasses. The lens shattered but saved her eye.



## Focus on the 'Big 6.'

Along with talking about required eye protection for different kinds of jobs and your organization's safety rules for eye protection, you'll want to focus your training spotlight on the main causes of eye injuries in your workplace. For most companies, the six leading culprits are:

1. **Flying objects** are the leading cause of eye injuries in American workplaces. BLS says that well over half of eye accidents are caused by flying or falling objects, or sparks striking the eye. And a significant number of those objects are smaller than a pinhead.
2. **Contact with chemicals** causes some 20 percent of eye injuries.
3. **Improper equipment operation** is responsible for over 30 percent of injuries.
4. **Poor choice of eyewear** results in a significant number of injuries. Although injured workers are often wearing eye protection, they're not wearing the right kind.
5. **Improper fit.** BLS says that 94 percent of the injuries to workers wearing eye protection result from objects or chemicals going around or under the protector.
6. **Lack of awareness.** Simple ignorance of the risks and the required protection is responsible for many workplace eye injuries. BLS says many injured workers, when asked after an accident, report that they didn't realize eye protection was necessary in the situation.

### Why It Matters...

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates that American businesses cumulatively spend upwards of \$450 billion every year on some 70,000 workplace eye injuries.
- Somewhere between 10 percent and 20 percent of those injuries are disabling (meaning permanent damage to at least one eye, often involving loss of sight).
- Most injured workers are performing their regular job when they are hurt.
- OSHA says the majority of injured employees are either not wearing any eye protection at the time of their accident or aren't wearing the right kind of eyewear for the job.