



# Basics of Preventing Eye Injuries

Eye injuries can cost your company a significant amount of money for first aid & treatment as well as downtime while your workers recuperate.

Wearing proper eye protection is a vital part of preventing eye injuries; however, it alone is not adequate to protect your workers. Shown below are actions you can take, where practicable, in addition to providing proper eye protection equipment.

- **Substitute less harmful chemicals** for corrosive/caustic or hot liquids that can splash into your workers' eyes (e.g. use non-corrosive drain cleaner instead of lye; use milder cleansers)
  - **Change the work process** so materials will not splash or fly (use pre-mixed chemicals instead of mixing them yourself; use hand files instead of grinders; purchase metal cut to order)
  - **Isolate/enclose the work** so splashes or flying fragments will not reach workers (e.g. cover paint cans & shake instead of stirring the paint, install shields on bench grinders to stop fragments)
  - **Use wet methods** to reduce dust & fragments (e.g. wetsanding, removing paint with water spray instead of sander)
  - **Use local exhaust ventilation** to keep dust or irritating mists/vapors/fumes from workers' faces (e.g. exhaust in paint spray booth, dust collector on woodworking machines)
  - **Use good housekeeping** to minimize the presence of dust or other items that can injure eyes (e.g. clean up sawdust so it does not become airborne; clean up solvent spills so they do not form irritating vapors; clean all liquid spills so they do not splash as workers walk in them)
  - **Use special hazard controls as needed** (e.g. use bright lighting to constrict laser users' pupils; use no reflective surfaces in areas where lasers are used; use light curtains around welding areas)
  - **Train workers** about the eye hazards in their work, the hazard controls you have provided, their need to use those controls, & the danger of bypassing the controls
- **Use protective eyewear** as described in the safety sheet entitled Eye Protection Basics. **(CAUTION: PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR OTHER HAZARD CONTROLS SUCH AS THOSE SHOWN ABOVE. IT IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR TRAINING. PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR IS NOT INVINCIBLE; LENSES CAN BREAK)**

Enlist your workers' ideas about controlling eye hazards. Utilize any special knowledge or training they may have; they may provide unique ideas. Implementing or revising controls based upon their comments may improve your productivity as well as reduce injuries (installing a guard may eliminate the need to dodge flying debris, which would enable them to work faster, even though they may still need to wear protective eyewear). Evaluate the effectiveness of your eye protection program & modify it as needed. (Remember that zero injuries does not necessarily mean the controls are perfect; it may mean you have been lucky.)