

WEAR EYE PROTECTION PROPERLY

We have talked about eye protection many times in the past. There is no question about how fragile our eyes are and how important it is to protect them. We all know when to wear eye protection on the job, but today we want to talk about other eye injuries that occur and how to prevent them. The majority of eye injuries do not occur because we fail to wear safety glasses. Many eye injuries occur even when safety glasses are being used. Today, we want to look at different ways eye injuries occur on the job. Let's look at some examples of actual eye injuries and their causes, and answer the question: "How do eye injuries happen when safety glasses are being worn?"

1. Glasses being worn improperly. Wearing glasses down on the nose will not properly protect the eyes. This often happens when your safety glasses are too dirty, scratched, or fogged up. Take care of your glasses and replace them when necessary.
2. Even when glasses are worn properly, 'cutting' your eyes and looking over the top of your glasses creates an opening for debris to fall. Bend your neck and look directly at your work.
3. When operating a screw gun just above the ground, we often have to turn the screw gun sideways. The vent from the gun can easily blow dust or metal shavings from the ground into your eye.
4. When lifting any kind of material overhead, debris on the material often falls off and gets into the eye. Even with glasses on, debris from above can easily fall behind your glasses.
5. Remember, we work in hot conditions and we all tend to sweat. If you do not keep your face, especially your forehead, clean, the perspiration can easily 'wash' debris into your eye.
6. Along that same line, we often reach up and wipe the sweat from our eyes with our hands. Many times, debris from your hand is rubbed into the eye.
7. We often work in windy conditions, such as near window openings, elevator shafts, fans, and similar areas. Wind blows debris into the air and into the eyes.
8. When cutting metal or screwing overhead, metal shavings often fly or fall onto our hard hats or even settle on top of our safety glasses. In addition, we often use full-face shields to protect our eyes. When we take our hard hats off or raise the face shield, the debris can fall directly over our eyes. You should always bend over, remove your hard hat and glasses, and clean them before you proceed.

Remember, safety glasses are designed to absorb or deflect flying debris. As we just discussed, they are not designed to provide total protection from every exposure we face every day. As you know, many jobs require the use of safety glasses 100% of the time. We have long recognized that cutting and screwing metal, operating cutting tools and powder-actuated tools, and working overhead present very real eye hazards, and we have taken the proper steps to protect ourselves. The hazards listed above are not as obvious; however, they account for the vast majority of eye injuries.

As with all safety issues, knowledge and awareness are the keys. Preventing all eye injuries depends on all of us being aware of the many possibilities of exposure, recognizing them, and taking the proper steps to eliminate the exposure.