



Eye Protection Program

Every day approximately 1,000 eye injuries occur in workplaces. These eye injuries account for an annual cost of \$300 million. In 60 percent of the injuries reported, the employees were not wearing eye protection. A properly implemented eye protection program can significantly reduce these losses.

Program Organization

OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.133 requires that employers must make suitable eye protection available where there is reasonable probability for eye injury. The employer must require employees to use eye protection in these areas.

A trained individual in the organization should be assigned the responsibility of administering and implementing the eye protection program. This individual must make a written copy of the eye protection operating procedures.

A successful program must be periodically monitored to determine the usage of eye protection devices and to evaluate new processes for eye protection needs.

Eye Protection Selection

Eye protection standards are based on ANSI Z87.1, Practice for Occupational and Educational Eye and Face Protection.

Eye protection should be considered optical instruments and be carefully selected, fitted and worn. Selection of proper eye protection starts with job analysis. Eye protection must be based on the nature of the individual eye hazard, i.e., chemical splash, sparks, glare, welding flash, particles, lasers, etc.

The following general guidelines should be noted:

Contact Lenses – These are not eye protection devices and should not be worn in hazardous environments without appropriate eye protection. The only approved eye protection is full enclosure goggles, and then, only if there is no potential for irritating vapors or mists. In most cases it is better to just not allow.

Tinted Glasses – These should not be worn indoors unless called for by the nature of the work or when prescribed for individuals by an ophthalmologist.

Welding – Filtered lenses should be used when welding. ANSI Z87.1 offers a guide on selecting the proper lens.

Lasers – Very specific guidelines are used to protect eyes against lasers. Refer to ANSI A136.1, The Safe Use of Lasers.

Eye Protection Use

Eye hazard areas should be designated according to the type of eye hazards existing in that area. Prominent warning signs should be in place at all entrances to the hazardous areas. Employees and visitors that enter these areas must wear appropriate eye protection.

Eye protection equipment must be properly fitted for comfort. Corrective glasses should be fitted by an ophthalmologist. However, an employee should be trained to fit, adjust, and maintain eye protection equipment. Each employee has to be trained in the proper use and care of his or her eye protection device.

Training

A successful eye protection program will incorporate a comprehensive training program for all management and supervisory personnel, to include the workers as well. Employees must be trained in the proper use and limitations of their eye protection devices. This should be documented and records maintained as evidence of training. Periodic retraining should also take place to reinforce the initial training.

Minimum training will include:

1. Explanation of the eye hazards associated with the job and the consequences of not using eye protection.
2. A demonstration of the proper fitting of the eye protection device.
3. Instructions on the proper cleansing and disinfecting of the eye protection devices.
4. Explanation of the limitations of the eye protection device being used.
5. Instruction on the proper use of eye protection devices with corrective lenses.

Supervision

Supervisory personnel should make sure that all employees are wearing proper eye protection equipment on the job. Employees not wearing proper eye protection should be removed from the hazardous location immediately. Employees that repeatedly violate the company's eye protection requirements are subject to disciplinary action.

Random checks should also be made by the safety director, safety committee or other designated personnel to check on the effectiveness of the eye protection program. These checks must include the proper selection, maintenance and use of all eye protection devices.