



The Eyes Have Had It

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How many of you can report having none of these happen?

- § A painter gets lacquer thinner in his eyes
- § A body tech is grinding, and a piece of metal flies into his eyes
- § Battery acid splashes up into someone's face
- § A mechanic, pounding on a wheel, has a fragment of rust go flying...into the eyes.

Sound familiar? Just one of those everyday things? We beg to differ. Those are common and preventable.

How many of you wear safety glasses every time you walk into your shops? If not, you're using body language to tell your workers that they don't have to wear them.

How many of you make an effort to provide comfortable, stylish safety glasses to your employees? If not, you're using your actions to tell them their eyes are of no importance.

The technical colleges do a stellar job of teaching their students to wear safety glasses. It's not optional. The students become used to wearing them while learning to repair vehicles in class. But then they leave school and start working in a shop where safety glasses are only grabbed when OSHA comes around. OSHA doesn't cause eye injuries. Work on cars does.

We want to see safety glasses worn at all times in the shop. If that's too hard to enforce, paint lines down the center aisle, and require safety glasses whenever people are working outside of those lines. Or require them whenever an employee has a tool (of any type) in hand.

Enforce that policy. Gripping that, well, you've told them to wear safety glasses and they just won't isn't a legitimate excuse. If they refuse to work on Ford cars, do you just grumble? If they don't like doing oil changes or masking cars, do you just shrug? Wearing protective equipment is an integral part of the job. If an employee doesn't repair a dent in a car, he's not doing a basic part of the job. If he doesn't wear eye protection, he's not doing a basic part of the job.

You might note that refusing to do the dent repair deprives you of income. Not wearing safety glasses doesn't have as clear an effect on your bottom line. But every time employees have to stop work to try to get particles out of their eyes, it costs you in lost productivity. If they need to go to a clinic to get the particle out, it costs you that lost work time, plus the time needed to take the employee in, plus the time to do the paperwork, plus the additional charge to your insurance mod rate. And that assumes the employee's back to work the next day. OSHA figures the

average cost of an eye injury is over \$1400. At 5% profit, you need an extra \$28,000 in income to pay for that. A \$10 pair of safety glasses suddenly looks like a bargain.

Safety glasses won't prevent all eye injuries. They won't keep all particles out of the eyes. They won't keep acid or alkaline wheel cleaner from burning. So encourage employees to choose safety glasses that fit tightly to their faces. And don't rely on safety glasses alone.

Battery acid and wheel brighteners are corrosive. For those, employees should be using face shields, to protect their faces from contact. For the wheel brighteners, using safety goggles under the face shield is even better. Employees only have two eyes – splashing those strong acids or alkalis into the face could result in no eyes at all.

Face shields should be used for grinding, too. They aren't a substitute for safety glasses. In fact, because of the curvature of the shield, particles might be able to get past the face shield and into eyes. So combine the face shield with safety glasses.

Prescription eyewear? That's a challenge with safety glasses. Some people might do fine with safety glasses with built-in reading lenses. Others may need to get prescription safety glasses, with add-on side shields. The technology isn't perfect yet. But the technology sure beats blinking. Or using a white cane.

If you have questions about safety glasses, personal protective equipment, or other safety issues, contact CHESS at 651-481-9787; toll free at 877-482-4377, or carkey@chess-safety.com

This article is intended to provide general information (not advice) about current safety topics. To discuss your specific concerns and how CHESS may help, please contact CHESS at 651-481-9787 or chess@chess-safety.com

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