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Workplace Eye Safety

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Eye injuries at work are common. Every year about 70,000 workers injure their eyes. Luckily, 90 percent of all workplace eye injuries are preventable with the use of proper safety eyewear.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provides regulations, which employers and employees must follow. OSHA reports that nearly three out of every five workers injured were not wearing eye protection at the time of their accident. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) provides these standards of eye protection for any workplace task.

- Unprotected workers will not knowingly be subjected to environmental hazards.
- Protective eyewear is required whenever there is a reasonable probability eye injury may occur.
- Employers must provide the type of eye protection best suited to the task to be performed.
- Employees are required to use the eye protectors provided.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that eye injuries in the workplace cost over \$467 million annually. A written eye safety program should be implemented in the workplace to help prevent workplace eye injuries.

Employers should consider these tips in developing their safety plan:

- Determine potential of eye injury for the tasks performed.
- Decide how best to protect against the injury, e.g., dark lenses for welding, face-shield for flying objects, tight seal for chemical spills, etc.
- Identify the visual needs of the job, e.g., magnification, dark lenses, etc.
- Post rules requiring when and how eye protection should be used.
- Provide adequate supplies of eye protection and have them readily available at the work site.
- Instruct employees on appropriate treatment if injury should occur.
- Require vision screening for new employees to determine any eye disease.