

Pinnacol Pointers for Safety Group Programs

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Eye Safety: Focus on Requirements, Products and Practices

More than 20,000 eye injuries occur in the workplace every year at a cost of more than \$300 million in lost production time, medical expenses and workers' compensation. The good news, says the American Academy of Ophthalmology, is that consistent use of safety glasses can prevent nearly 90 percent of these injuries.

Industry Requirements

Manufacturing, construction, woodworking, laboratory, welding, plumbing, medical and auto industries must outfit certain workers with safety eyewear, per OSHA requirements. Employees who work with energized electrical equipment require eye and face protection, as well. These workers risk injury from arc flashes and arc blasts. The ANSI Z87.1-2010 Standard requires that protective eyewear bear labeling on lenses and frames. All high-impact lenses must show the manufacturer's mark, followed by a + sign in the upper/outer corner. All prescription safety lenses must be paired with frames marked "Z87-2+" for ANSI compliance.

Product Choices

That's clear enough. Less clear is which eyewear to choose from the myriad products available. One emerging trend combines safety eyewear with other personal protective equipment, or PPE. Integrated face shields, for example, offer further protection from chemical splashes, falling objects and flying sparks. And innovations in anti-fogging technology and indirect venting optimize workers' visibility.

Your organization can choose from safety glasses and safety goggles. Goggles shield the face around the eyes, but must be fitted to form a perfect seal. Safety glasses with a foam gasket around the frontal eye socket bone protects workers from airborne fibers, dust and bugs., while cover safety goggles can be worn over corrective eyewear. Lastly, choices in lens coatings accommodate a range of lighting situations. But your employees shouldn't wear tinted eyewear inside dark buildings; clear-lens safety eyewear is necessary when indoors.

Workplace Practices

Get the most from your investment in PPE by encouraging your workers to wear their safety eyewear.

- Fit employees for safety eyewear and give them options. For example, HVAC workers may prefer reversed bifocal lenses, enabling them to view objects up close without tilting their heads back.
- Noncompliance is due most often to fogging, discomfort or both.
- Publish eyewear and other PPE policies in your organization's employee handbook.
- Review the PPE policy with workers; get their "buy-in."
- Hold a safety class that showcases tenured employees demonstrating what works best to protect their eyes.
- Train supervisors to enforce PPE policies.
- Lead by example; encourage managers and supervisors to wear protective eyewear. Workers watch for demonstrable safety leadership!

Resources

We encourage you to visit [OSHA's website](#) for helpful resources. Its "eTool," for example, includes a hazard assessment, information about selecting protective devices and OSHA's requirements.

For guidance on safety eyewear, workplace practices and resources to help protect your workers' eyes, visit the [Knowledge Center](#) on Pinnacol's website. Or contact Pinnacol's Safety On Call at safetyoncall@pinnacol.com or 303.361.4700 or 888.501.4752. Our safety services team stands ready to answer questions and help keep your workforce safe, healthy and on the job.

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