



Workplace Eye Health and Safety

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To mark March as Workplace Eye Health and Safety Month, we want to alert Hoosiers to the possibility of eye injuries and other eye health concerns that may occur in the workplace.

Despite existing safety legislation and educational programs, each working day in the United States, more than 2,000 employees sustain job-related eye injuries, making workplace injury a leading cause of ocular trauma, visual loss and blindness. Of these, ten to twenty percent will be disabling because of temporary or permanent vision loss.

Ninety percent of these injuries could have been prevented with appropriate protective eyewear. Many of those injured workers reported that they didn't think they needed to wear eye protection or were wearing eyewear inappropriate for the job. Safety eyewear must have "ANSI Z-87" marked on the frame. The lens should also have an imprint from the lab etched into the lens. These tell an employer or an OSHA inspector that they eyewear is impact resistant and has been met industry safety standards. Most injuries occur where safety eyewear is not mandated and is left up to the individual.

Eye protection needs to be used whenever there is a chance that machines or activities could present a hazard from flying objects, chemical splashes, radiation or a combination of these or other dangers. Anyone walking through those areas should also wear protective eyewear.

Injuries aren't the only issue employees need to be aware of. As more people use computers in the workplace, complaints of eye fatigue, difficulty focusing and discomfort have become more common. In addition, heating and air conditioning systems in office buildings can increase problems with dry eyes during the winter. Dry eye occurs when the eye doesn't produce enough tears to keep the eye comfortable. Usual symptoms include stinging or burning in eyes, scratchiness, a feeling that there's something in the eye, excessive tearing or difficulty wearing contact lenses.

To determine the cause of your discomfort, see your eye care professional for a complete eye exam. In addition to necessary safety eyewear you may also need

to wear specific eyewear when working at a computer or your prescription may need updating.

Taking appropriate precautions when needed is the best way to avoid unwanted eye injuries. The easiest way to protect your eyes is to wear safety glasses or goggles when working in any area where flying objects may occur.

Besides the workplace, many people also forget their protective eyewear while working around the house such as working on the car, in the yard or with metal or wood. Eye protection is also important while playing recreational sports. Any sport that includes a potentially airborne entity such as a ball or puck should necessitate protective eyewear.

By taking these precautions and having regular eye exams you can assure your and your family's eye health and safety. If you have any questions regarding your eye health or any eye safety concerns please contact our office. Along with comprehensive eye examinations we also offer a wide range of prescription and nonprescription safety eyewear. We would be happy to work with you and your family to fulfill your eyecare needs.

"Your Eyesight is a precious gift. Let's work together to keep it that way."

---- Dr. Berghoff and Kelli Brooks' practice, StyleEyes, is located at the St.Vincent Physician Network office at 10801 North Michigan Road in Zionsville. To make an appointment, please call 317.344.1266 or visit www.styleyoureyes.com.