

# Protect your eyes



Would you do something that could cost you your eyesight? Most people would answer no to that question. Yet every day there are people working on Ontario construction sites who do just that. They work without eye protection even though there are hazards all around them that could damage their eyes.

If something like a nail or a wire gets stuck in your eye while you're working, Ontario's prevention system considers that a struck-by injury. Struck-by is the term used to describe the various injuries that occur when workers are hit—or struck—by tools, materials, equipment, or vehicles. The eyes are one of the most common body parts to be affected when someone suffers a struck-by injury. Between 2002 and 2012, almost 2,700 Ontario construction workers were injured when something hit them in the eye. These injuries could have been prevented if the workers had been wearing eye protection.

Part of the problem is that the current legislation does not make eye protection mandatory on jobsites. It's required in certain circumstances where there are hazards that could damage a worker's eyes. However, the reality is that those hazards are not often confined to a specific area. As workers, equipment, and materials move around the jobsite, so do the eye hazards. Some of those hazards are

- dust and grit
- flying debris (wood, stone, or concrete chips)
- sparks and slag from welding and cutting
- abrasives from sandblasting
- chemical splash
- pipes and wires sticking out of walls
- ties and wires hanging from ceilings
- the sun, which can cause UV damage
- the wind, which can dry eyes out and carry dust and grit.

Whether it's a physical object that hits your eye, or a biological or chemical hazard that causes the damage, it's clear that wearing eye protection at all times is a good idea. It's not surprising that many companies and jobsites have already made eye protection mandatory as part of their commitment to employee health and well-being.

## What to wear

Wearing the right kind of protection can prevent most eye injuries. Safety glasses with sideshields are considered the basic standard for eye protection on construction sites, but it's important to match the type of protection to the specific hazard. For example, goggles that protect your eyes from dust and other physical hazards may not protect your eyes from radiation or a chemical splash. All safety glasses and goggles should be CSA-approved, which means you should see the CSA logo on the frames. In order to protect you the way they are designed to, your safety glasses should fit securely.



If you're a welder, your safety glasses should also have a shade number marked on them. Always keep your safety glasses on, even when you remove other personal protective equipment such as a welding helmet or faceshield. When you raise your visor or shield, you may still be exposed to flying chips, dust, or other hazards.

If you already wear regular glasses or contact lenses to correct your eyesight, you should wear prescription safety glasses on the site. Avoid wearing contact lenses—dust and other particles can get under the lens and irritate your eyes. It is important to replace your prescription safety glasses if they are scratched or damaged or if your eyeglass prescription has changed.

Consider making eye protection mandatory on your jobsite. Make eye protection your next safety talk by visiting [ihsa.ca/safetytalks](http://ihsa.ca/safetytalks)