Workplace safety is critical so there are several topics that employers and employees must monitor. This edition of Health and Safety News highlights one such topic—eye protection. The information included was taken directly from the websites of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (http://www.cdc.gov/) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/eye/). To read further about any topic presented, please visit the aforementioned websites and/or right mouse click information in blue and select Open Hyperlink for more details.
EYE SAFETY

The following note appears on the site’s page:

NOTE: This page is archived for historical purposes and is no longer being maintained or updated.

Each day about 2,000 U.S. workers have a job-related eye injury that requires medical treatment. About one third of the injuries are treated in hospital emergency departments and more than 100 of these injuries result in one or more days of lost work. The majority of these injuries result from small particles or objects striking or abrading the eye. Examples include metal slivers, wood chips, dust, and cement chips that are ejected by tools, wind blown, or fall from above a worker. Some of these objects, such as nails, staples, or slivers of wood or metal penetrate the eyeball and result in a permanent loss of vision. Large objects may also strike the eye/face, or a worker may run into an object causing blunt force trauma to the eyeball or eye socket. Chemical burns to one or both eyes from splashes of industrial chemicals or cleaning products are common. Thermal burns to the eye occur as well. Among welders, their assistants, and nearby workers, UV radiation burns (welder’s flash) routinely damage workers’ eyes and surrounding tissue.

In addition to common eye injuries, health care workers, laboratory staff, janitorial workers, animal handlers, and other workers may be at risk of acquiring infectious diseases via ocular exposure. Infectious diseases can be transmitted through the mucous membranes of the eye as a result of direct exposure (e.g., blood splashes, respiratory droplets generated during coughing or suctioning) or from touching the eyes with contaminated fingers or other objects. The infections may result in relatively minor conjunctivitis or reddening/soreness of the eye or in a life threatening disease such as HIV, B virus, or possibly even avian influenza.

Engineering controls should be used to reduce eye injuries and to protect against ocular infection exposures. Personal protective eyewear, such as goggles, face shields, safety glasses, or full face respirators must also be used when an eye hazard exists. The eye protection chosen for specific work situations depends upon the nature and extent of the hazard, the circumstances of exposure, other protective equipment used, and personal vision needs. Eye protection should be fit to an individual or adjustable to provide appropriate coverage. It should be comfortable and allow for sufficient peripheral vision. Selection of protective eyewear appropriate for a given task should be made based on a hazard assessment of each activity, including regulatory requirements when applicable.
NIOSH Eye Safety Resources

Eye Safety Checklist
A five point checklist of good eye safety practices with printable flyer.

Eye Safety - Emergency Response & Disaster Recovery
Provides an overview of eye hazards and injuries, plus information on types of eye protection, safety for prescription lens wearers, and first aid.

Eye Protection for Infection Control
Provides background information and specific details on eye protection used to supplement eye protection recommendations provided in current CDC infection control guidance documents. It is intended to familiarize workers with the various types of eye protection available, their characteristics, and their applicable use.

Eye Safety Tool Box Talk
Provides an example tool box talk on eye protection for construction workers.

Contact Lens Use in a Chemical Environment
NIOSH Publication 2005-139 (June 2005)
Provides safety guidelines for contact lens wearers working in chemical environments.

Reference
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