

Protection from eye injuries

What is the problem?

Workers can sustain eye injuries when exposed to airborne fragments from work processes such as cutting, drilling or grinding metal, timber or other materials.

What are the risks?

Eye injuries include lacerations and penetration injuries, and can result in scarring, loss of clear vision, and partial or complete blindness.

What is a solution to the problem?

If a task or piece of equipment is producing airborne fragments, first try to eliminate or reduce production of airborne fragments by changing the task or using different equipment. These tasks may also need to be screened off or isolated from other workers to minimise the risk of injury from being too close to the work.

Always aim for the highest level of protection

The first step should always be to try to eliminate the hazard. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is not always the first or best solution. Use it only when all other options have been considered.

If the task or equipment generating the airborne fragments cannot be removed, make sure that workers exposed to the hazard are wearing appropriate PPE including eye protection. The types of available eye protection vary depending on the needs of the worker and task performed.

Make sure the eye protection is suitable for the work being performed. Although a workplace may require safety glasses to be worn on site, these may not be appropriate for specific tasks and protection from deflected fragments. For example, in a confined space, where airborne fragments can rebound from nearby surfaces, workers may be

required to wear close-fitted goggles in addition to a full-face shield.



Image 1 – Example of prescription safety glasses



Image 2 – Example of safety glasses



Image 3 – Example of safety goggles



Image 4 – Example of protective face shield

If you're not sure what type of eye protection a task requires, talk to a supplier about the type of eye protection that may be needed. Check if your supplier can come to your workplace to tailor eye protection for workers, including options for prescription eyewear.

Alternatively, check the operating manual of the equipment being used that is creating the airborne fragments for guidance on suitable eye protection. The manufacturer or supplier of the equipment may also be able to provide information on the appropriate PPE for using that equipment.

Note that any eye protection should be compliant with the applicable parts of Australian Standards *AS/NZS 1337.1:2010 Personal eye protection - Eye and face protectors for occupational applications* and *AS/NZS 1337.6:2012 Personal eye protection – Prescription eye protectors against low and medium impact*. The products and packaging are required to be marked in accordance with these standards.

Further information

For more information on reducing the risk of eye injuries through selection of eye protection see *AS/NZS 1336:2014 Eye and face protection—Guidelines*.

For further information visit worksafe.qld.gov.au or call 1300 362 128.

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