



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY
EXPERIMENT STATION

MAFES DAWG TRACKS

It's about to be March already, and that means Workplace Eye Wellness month. Did you know there are almost 10,000 eye injuries every year from the flying debris of power tools? There are also 15,000 eye injuries a year from welding operations which can additionally include harmful ultraviolet, infrared, and visible spectrum radiation.

Workplace eye injuries are usually the result of the wrong type of eye protection, ill-fitting designs, or just not having any protection at all. The regulation 29CFR 1910.133 states that, "The employer shall ensure that **each affected employee uses appropriate eye or face protection when exposed to eye or face hazards from flying particles, molten metal, liquid chemicals, acids or caustic liquids, chemical gases or vapors, or potentially injurious light radiation.**

Are you thinking, "That doesn't matter to me, I sit at a desk working on a computer all day."? If so, your eye wellness is also at risk. Less risk from an object, yet more risk from digital eye strain. Symptoms for digital eye strain include blurred vision, dry eyes and headaches. According to Dr. Mark Kahrhoff, this occurs for several reasons. First, significant muscular effort is required to sustain clear vision at close working distances. Over hours, the visual system simply experiences muscular fatigue. Secondly, sustained close work also commands tremendously focused attention and can result in perceptual tunneling that increases distractibility and reduces attention span.

To help reduce the effects of digital eye strain, Prevent Blindness recommends that workers take frequent breaks by using the "20-20-20" rule. Every 20 minutes look away from your screen and look at an object 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. This gives your eyes a chance to reset and replenish themselves.

Eye Injury Prevention Tips:

- ✓ Maintain a good supply of safety glasses of different sizes & styles; you are more likely to wear what is comfortable & you like.
- ✓ Anyone in the same area of flying debris should also wear eye protection, not just the direct user of a tool.
- ✓ Use coatings or filters to reduce glare and exposure to blue-light from computer screens, tablets or cell phones.
- ✓ While the correct shade of lens in a welding hood or cutting goggle is critical for the user, don't forget about the co-worker nearby. Be aware that other workers in the area can sustain eye damage from the radiation as far as 50 feet away if that light is able to reflect off other parts, the wall or concrete. A welding curtain may be necessary.
- ✓ While using a computer, maintain mindfulness about blinking often, position screens where you are looking slightly downward, avoid multiple screens, and take breaks.
- ✓ Most sunglasses are not safety glasses. True safety glasses/shields will be marked with "Z87.1".

If your eye wellness is compromised understand the steps to prevent further damage:

- Know first aid measures to administer.
- Have emergency eyewash stations accessible for flushing, especially where chemicals are used.
- Consult a physician if a foreign object is imbedded, pain persists, or vision has been compromised in any way.

Sources:

<https://weeklysafety.com/blog/workplace-eye-wellness-month>
<https://preventblindness.org>
<https://ohsonline.com>

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