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EYE PROTECTION DO'S AND DON'TS

March is National Eye Health and Safety Month, so let's put the spotlight on eye safety this month.

DO:

- ☑ **Choose the right eye protection** for the job. The wrong choice may not provide the level of protection you need.
- ☑ **Inspect eye protection** before each use. Replace if lenses are pitted and scratched, headbands are loose or damaged, or frames are bent or damaged.
- ☑ **Take care of eye protection.** After each use, wash gently in warm soapy water, rinse thoroughly, and air dry. After chemical exposure, follow decontamination procedures. Store eye protection in a clean dust-proof case.

DON'T:

- ☒ **Substitute regular glasses for safety glasses.** They may look the same, but regular glasses are not strong enough to resist a hard blow, even with shatter-proof lenses. The lens or frame could be pushed into your eye as the result of a hard blow.
- ☒ **Wear contact lenses in conditions that expose you to heavy dust,** vapors, or splashes. In fact, OSHA prohibits wearing contact lenses when using a respirator or when exposed to certain substances. If you wear contacts, check with your supervisor before you wear them on the job.
- ☒ **Wear metal-framed eye protection in areas where there may be an electrical hazard.** Metal conducts electricity, so accidental contact between the frame and an energized power source could mean real tragedy.

Use protective eyewear during all hazardous activities.

Marine and Aviation Operations
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Eye on Eye Safety

See why you need to use eye protection

It's been estimated that 2,000 eye injuries occur in the workplace every day, of which 10 percent to 20 percent are disabling. In other words, the person loses some or all sight in one or both eyes. It's also estimated that 90 percent of all eye injuries can be prevented.

The best place to start preventing eye injuries is by identifying the eye hazards in your job. The list of possible hazards includes:

- **Impact**—from flying chips, particles, sand, dirt, etc.
- **Burns**—from sparks, molten metal, or chemical splashes
- **Irritation**—from chemical vapors or dust
- **Light radiation**—from welding and similar operations
- **Glare**—may not cause injury, but affects ability to see well and work safely

Protect your eyes from the hazards in your workplace by using the proper personal protective equipment (PPE):

- **Safety glasses with side shields** or goggles for impact hazards—and a face shield over the safety eyewear for extra protection
- **Goggles worn with a face shield** for burn hazards
- **Ventilated safety goggles** to protect against chemical vapors or dust
- **Welding goggles** with special lenses to filter out harmful light radiation
- **Sunglasses** for outdoor work—or adjusting task lighting to eliminate glare

Here are some other general precautions to prevent eye injuries:

- **Obey all warning signs** requiring eye protection.
- **Don protective eyewear before entering** hazardous areas.
- **Make sure eye protection fits properly** and comfortably, including when worn over prescription glasses.
- **Always check protective eyewear** for damage and replace it immediately if it has any defect.
- **Assume that eye hazards are present** whenever you're in doubt.
- **Ask your supervisor what PPE to wear** if you're not sure what the correct type of eye protection is in a particular situation.

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WHAT IT TAKES TO BE SAFE

Examine workplace accident records for several years, and you may find that the root cause of many of the accidents was **unsafe acts** rather than unsafe conditions. Read between the lines of the accident reports, and you may find that the workers involved had become complacent about safety—that they'd taken shortcuts and developed an "It can't happen to me" attitude.

Don't let that happen to you. Think ahead as you approach each task and consider:

➔ What you're working with
➔ What you'll be doing
➔ Where you'll be going
➔ What could go wrong

Stay safe by focusing on your work 100 percent of the time, no matter how many times you may have done the same job. All it takes is 1 second of inattention, one moment of carelessness.

Why It Matters...

➔ 4.4 million nonfatal injuries and illnesses were reported in private industry in one recent year.
➔ 2.3 million of those cases involved days away from work, job transfer, or restricted duty.
➔ In the same year, well over 5,000 U.S. workers were killed in job accidents.
➔ It has been estimated that 80 percent to 90 percent of workplace accidents are the result of **unsafe acts.**

12 Key Safety Rules

Fill in the blanks on workplace safety

Test your knowledge of workplace safety by completing each statement below.

1. At all times while you work, be alert for anything that could go _____.
2. Wear _____ to protect against job hazards.
3. When you lift a heavy object, lift with your _____, not your back.
4. Before you begin a job, look for _____.
5. Don't take _____ even if you're very familiar with your job.
6. Be very careful with _____ tasks, tools, substances, and equipment.
7. Never use _____ or _____ on the job or come to work under their influence.
8. Report any _____ conditions to your supervisor immediately.
9. Ask _____ if you are not sure about any safety hazard or procedure.
10. Pay _____ to your work at all times.
11. When using a hazardous substance, read the container _____ and the _____ before you begin work.
12. Keep the workplace safe by taking _____ for safety.

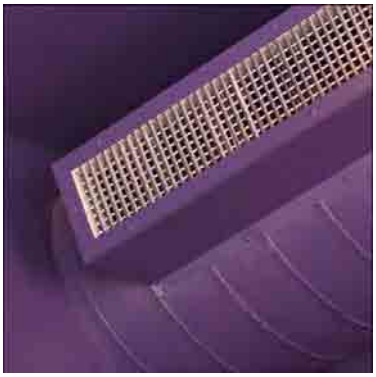
Answers:
(1) wrong (2) PPE (personal protective equipment) (3) legs (4) hazards
(5) shortcuts (6) new (7) drugs; alcohol (8) unsafe (9) questions (10) attention
(11) label; MSDS (material safety data sheet) (12) responsibility

Safety IQ Test

How safety smart are you?

1. Which is more important: doing a job right or doing it safely?
a. Doing it right b. Doing it safely c. There is no difference between them
2. What is the relationship between safety at work and safety at home?
a. There is no relationship
b. Safety information you learn at work should also be practiced at home
c. You can't compare workplace safety to home safety
3. When should you pay attention to a safety training session?
a. When you don't know anything about the topic
b. When you know a lot about the topic
c. Always
4. Who is primarily responsible for workplace safety?
a. The government b. The company c. Everybody—including you
5. When should you use PPE?
a. When it is required to prevent injuries
b. When you don't have enough experience to do a job without it
c. When your supervisor is around
6. What is the only acceptable excuse for ignoring safety rules and procedures?
a. You have several years of experience doing the same job
b. You're on a tight schedule and your supervisor will kill you if you fall behind
c. There's never an acceptable excuse

Answers: (1) c (2) b (3) c (4) c (5) a (6) c



Explosive Potential

Compressed gas safety

Compressed gas cylinders must be manufactured to meet safety standards and come equipped with a variety of safety features. Even so, they have the potential to cause serious accidents—some of them fatal. Although there is some variation depending on the gas, all cylinders must be stored:

❍ In a dry, well-ventilated area
❍ At least 20 feet from combustible materials, heat sources, or electrical wiring
❍ Away from stairs and elevators
❍ In locations where they are unlikely to be knocked over or banged
❍ Upright, secured by a chain or cable
❍ At least 20 feet from oxygen cylinders
❍ With valves closed and valve protection caps screwed down
❍ With the oldest cylinders placed so that they will be used first

Follow these special handling precautions when moving cylinders:

❍ Secure them in an upright position to a hand truck or other appropriate device.
❍ Keep valve protection caps on when moving them.
❍ Don't try to carry cylinders by hand, roll them, or drag them.
❍ Make sure not to bump, bang, or drop cylinders.
❍ Keep them away from sparks, heat, fire, and electrical circuits.
❍ Avoid handling cylinders with oily or greasy hands.
❍ Be careful of fingers and avoid pinch points.

Proper Ventilation

How to keep the air clean

Some work areas may contain air contaminants such as dust, vapors, chemical fumes, and gases that can be extremely hazardous when concentrated. In such areas, companies control air contaminants with ventilation. For example, your work area might be equipped with local exhaust systems, which are made up of:

➔ **Hoods,** which capture the contaminants as close to the source as possible
➔ **Ducts,** which carry the contaminants away from the area
➔ **Fans,** which move the air through the system
➔ **Filters, scrubbers, or precipitators,** which take contaminants out of the air

Ventilation systems won't protect you if they aren't kept clean and in good repair, so:

➔ Always make sure the ventilation system is operating properly before you begin to work in an area where there may be harmful air contaminants.
➔ Make sure hoods are positioned properly to draw air away from the source of contamination.
➔ Be sure ducts are free of clogs and leaks.
➔ Get in the habit of inspecting ventilation systems and learn how to correct simple problems.

If you're not sure whether ventilation is required, don't guess. Ask a supervisor.

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CONTROL YOUR STRESS

Do you manage stress in a healthful way or do you:

☹ Blow up—get angry and blame others
☹ Expect things to go wrong
☹ Withdraw and avoid new situations
☹ Hold in your feelings
☹ Try to do too much
☹ Take things personally

Remember that stress is a natural reaction to external events—things over which you have little control. What you can control, however, is your reaction to these events.

A negative reaction to stress just makes it worse. Instead, take control of the situation and look for ways to change it. Even small positive changes will reduce your stress.

BURIED IN GARBAGE

Americans throw away 28 billion glass jars and bottles every year. We also toss out about 32 billion pounds of plastic annually. That's a lot of garbage, and it has to go somewhere.

Unfortunately, only a small portion of it finds its way into recycling efforts. And that's too bad because by failing to recycle more of our waste, we're using up scarce natural resources, we're spending a lot of tax dollars to deal with mounds of garbage, we're running out of landfill space, and we're risking damage to the environment.

What can you do about it?

◆ Recycle in your town.
◆ Buy items made from recycled materials.
◆ Use fewer disposable products.

What Do You See?

Protect your eyesight

How much do you really see? Only what your eyes look at? Or do you also see with your imagination, knowledge, and experience? Imagine that you are about to sharpen a tool on a grinding wheel without any eye protection. You see the sign that says, “EYE PROTECTION REQUIRED.” But is that all you see? If you’re also looking with your mind’s eye, you will also see:

- ⇨ The possibility of a tiny chip striking your eye.
- ⇨ An image of yourself with a black patch over one eye or with a glass eye.
- ⇨ The difficulty of working or driving when one of your eyes is sightless.

Only one eye accident is necessary. Once the damage is done, it may not be possible to undo it. When you’re tempted to take a risk with your precious eyesight by failing to use required eye protection, take a second look. Look into the twilight zone of what could happen as a result. Then let that second sight guide you to the sensible, safe decision.

Remember, eye protection will never do the important job it was intended to do if it’s raised up on your forehead, hanging around your neck, tucked into your pocket, or lying on the shelf in your locker. Sure, you can get a look-alike eye if one is destroyed in an accident, but you can never get a see-alike eye.

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WATCH YOUR BACK!

Back injuries put almost half a million U.S. workers on the sick list every year. The major causes of back injuries include:

- ☒ Lifting objects incorrectly
- ☒ Poor sitting and standing positions
- ☒ Muscle strains
- ☒ Slipped or herniated disks
- ☒ Poor physical condition (especially pot bellies and weak stomach muscles)

Give your back the support it needs:

- ☑ Lift with your legs, not your back.
- ☑ Maintain a healthy lifestyle—exercise and lose weight, if necessary.
- ☑ Get early medical attention for any back problem.

WHY SAFETY MATTERS

Here’s what OSHA has to say:
“Safe workplaces not only save life, they promote successful, vibrant lives. Workers who suffer a disabling injury can lose 40 percent of their income over five years. Families can lose even more because of the increased stress, conflict, and divorce associated with occupational injury and illness. On the other hand, safe workplaces provide an environment for healthy workers whose jobs become vehicles for making a life—not just a living.”

TRAVEL HEALTH TIP

The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine recommends that you not use airline-provided blankets or pillows unless they are in sealed packages. Unsealed items may have germs from previous passengers.

PPE Pays Off for Navy Essex Sailor

by ABH2(AW) Jason Bourgoin, Safety Petty Officer, USS Essex (LHD 2)

It was a Saturday morning like any other-hot and humid but nothing out of the ordinary. Although most people were enjoying liberty, deck Sailors were hard at work preparing the ship's sides for painting. One of these Sailors was a young seaman assigned to 2nd division. He was wearing all the required PPE, including goggles, hearing protection, and a dust respirator.

The seaman was using a 7-inch pneumatic sander, a very common tool for the assigned job. Everything was OK until a small piece of the disk broke off, causing a 2-inch laceration on his left hand. It took eight stitches to close the wound.

"But wait," perhaps you're thinking. "This Sailor was wearing PPE, which is designed to protect all the 'soft, meaty parts,' and he still got hurt."

You're right. However, what could have happened if the young seaman hadn't been wearing any PPE? What if he hadn't taken those two minutes to walk over to the Safety Office and check out those goggles, hearing protection, and dust respirator? Instead of cutting his hand, he could easily have suffered a 2-inch laceration to his eyeball and been blinded in that eye.

Although not perfect, PPE does help. Just ask any Sailor who has been spared a serious injury because he was wearing goggles or a cranial, and he'll quickly tell you he's glad he took the few extra minutes getting ready to do a job. Besides that, it pleases safety petty officers like me.

Editor's note: Lt. Bart Fabacher, USS Essex safety officer, adds, "I spend every day trying to drive home the idea that PPE is not a nuisance. Imagine my delight when the author handed me the following account, which made me realize someone in the workcenter finally gets it."