

safety matters

Construction
Toolbox Talks for

From your safety partners at Cool Insuring Agency, Inc.

Keep the Worksite Safe with PPE

In 2012, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 817 cases of workplace fatality in the construction industry alone—that's more than two deaths every day. Within the industry, specialty trade contractors, heavy construction and civil engineering construction topped the list with the most on-the-job deaths.

One of the most important things workers do to stay out of harm's way on the job is to use personal protective equipment (PPE) properly. While OSHA follows all government regulations regarding PPE and maintains American National Standards where required, it is also important that employees do their part.

Foot protection, which includes steel-toe boots, safety-toe boots, steel-capped boots or safety shoes, is a must for all workers in the presence of heavy machinery. It will also protect your feet from falling objects and puncture wounds from below. They may also help you keep stable footing in inclement weather. Most shoes will have symbols on the outside to illustrate the type of protection the footwear offers.

Head protection is required in areas with the danger of head impact, falling or flying objects and electrical shock or burn.

Though it is often overlooked, **hearing protection** is crucial in a construction environment to prevent permanent damage. Remember that plain cotton is not an acceptable form of ear protection.

When there is a chance of physical, chemical or radiation damage to the eyes or face, you must wear appropriate PPE. Everyday glasses do not qualify and are no excuse for lack of proper protection—request eye and face PPE that fits over glasses.

Respiratory protection is one of the most important pieces of PPE for a construction worker, so it is important for you to understand how to use this PPE properly and what its limitations are.

All lifelines, safety belts and lanyards used for employee safeguarding may not be used for loading or load testing. These PPE items are crucial in protecting against falls, and equipment may be damaged by improper use.

Employers will provide safety nets when workplaces are more than 25 feet above ground or water surface or where other fall protection is deemed impractical. Know that you should not begin work until the safety nets have been properly installed and tested.

Often times, workers don't wear their safety equipment because it's a nuisance to put on or because it's bulky and uncomfortable. It can be tempting not to put PPE on at all unless the safety supervisor is looking, but ultimately, it is up to you to be a professional and recognize the life-saving benefits of PPE.

A poorly fitted piece of protective equipment can cause headache or pain, and if it does, see your supervisor immediately to have it adjusted or re-fitted. But most of the time, it's

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just a matter of getting used to wearing these items. This is a lot easier when you remember that, like the football player, you stand a better chance of continuing successfully with your job and your home life if you are protected from possible serious injury by protective equipment.