

Toolbox Talks 2

003: Assumptions That Blind You

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Select a crew member to help you with the demonstration. Meet ahead of time to go over things. The demonstration will be in two parts:

1. Asking for help if something gets in your eye.
2. Intervening if a coworker cries out and reaches for his or her eye.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Assumptions that lead to blinding eye injury, why they are wrong, and what to do instead.

Discussion notes:

Some eye injury facts to think about

- It really hurts. Eye injuries are among the most painful of all injuries.
- If you lose sight in both eyes, you will not be able to work ever again in this trade. How will you earn a living?
- The human eye is the most vulnerable exposed part of the body. It's also the easiest to protect.
- Anything that can injure an eye will do so regardless of whether you are on break, just walking to your work area, in a hurry to finish, or even mowing the lawn at home. There are only two factors involved in an eye injury: The item that can injure the eye, and the eye protection that was missing.

Cautions

- Assess the need for eye protection, regardless of any posted signage. If in doubt, never go without. Err on the side of safety.
- You do not get a second chance to protect your eyes in the event of an injury. There is no "do over," just damage done.

Assumptions

The following assumptions can leave you blind.

- "I'm not on the clock, I don't have to wear safety glasses." The purpose of wearing safety glasses has nothing to do with the clock. It has everything to do with protecting your eyes. If you are walking past a carpentry crew that has started early and a nail pops your way, those safety glasses will protect your eyes. Being off the clock won't.
- "Safety glasses protect me." That assumption is actually a good one, if you are wearing your safety glasses properly and if safety glasses are the only protection the situation requires. Those "ifs" make all the difference. Wear those glasses where they belong, not on the top of your head, hanging from a strap, or in your shirt pocket. Wear a face shield or goggles, if needed.
- "I'm working with only a little of the chemical, the goggles really aren't necessary." If the label or MSDS indicates goggles, wear them. A single drop of a caustic splashed into your eye can destroy the vision in that eye.
- "If something gets into my eye, just rub it out and I'll be fine." What you are more likely to do is rub something into your cornea and cause an infection. Or, you may just shove a metal splinter into your eye. Instead of rubbing your eye, ask someone nearby to assist you in getting to a medical station. You need that eye looked at. You can try lifting the lid away from your eye and leaning forward to drop the material from your eye. But you still need medical attention and you still need to report the incident. *[Note to Presenter. Perform the demonstration with the crew member you selected earlier.]*

Review and discussion

1. What are some other wrong assumptions you can think of or may have heard?
2. What are some things we know about eye injuries?
3. Has anyone in this crew had an eye injury, and can you sum up your experience?
4. Why do we wear safety glasses?
5. What do we have to do with safety glasses to get the eye protection they offer?
6. Where do you need to wear safety glasses on this job site?
7. When might you need more protection than just safety glasses?
8. If you are in doubt as to whether to use a particular kind of eye protection for a given situation, what should you do?
9. What should you do if something gets in your eye, even if you have no idea what it is or where it came from?
10. What should you do if a coworker suddenly cries out and puts a hand up to his or her eye?

Participant's Signature and Date

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