

Toolbox Talks 2

055: Unsafe Acts: Eyes

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Review company policies related to eye safety.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Most injuries occur not due to unsafe conditions, but due to unsafe acts. This Safety Talk addresses acts that endanger your eyes. Electrical work is highly visual, and good eyesight is a requirement for this kind of work. Protecting our eyes is important for many other reasons as well.

Discussion notes:

Critical point to remember

Wearing safety glasses is not always enough to protect your eyes.

Unsafe acts and your eyes

- Wearing safety glasses only when your foreman is around. Your foreman is not the reason to wear safety glasses. Protecting your eyes is the reason. Dangers to your eyes don't show up only when your foreman does. Dangers to your eyes are present at all times on a job site, so that's when you should wear your eye protection.
- Taking the side shields off your safety glasses. This reduces your effective protection immensely. It's not smart to do.
- Wearing glasses that are in poor condition. Scratched or damaged lenses are weaker than lenses in good condition. They also impair your vision, creating further safety hazards while producing eyestrain. Replace glasses that aren't serviceable.
- Using two hands when making a test measurement. How can this damage your eyes? When you use one probe in each hand, you can create an ionization trail that "ignites" an arc flash. This flash may burn your retinas.
- Working in energized panels without properly isolating the energy sources. As with the probe situation, the danger is the arc flash. Wearing insulated gloves and taking other precautions is smart. But use PPE as your last line of defense. Use preventive measures and safe practices as your first line of defense.
- Being in an area where splash hazards are present without a face shield or other splash protection. You do not need to be working with a chemical for it to pose a hazard to your eyes. The fact you are "doing electrical work" and not handling chemicals does not protect your eyes. A face shield and/or goggles can.
- Working around welders without special precautions. Your first precaution is not to work around them, if you can simply come back after they're done. Work in their presence only if the proper screens are erected. Try to position yourself so the welding flashes are not in your line of sight.
- Working around grinding without special precautions. The same precautions as for welders apply. But additionally, you must account for the fact that grinding releases airborne particles at high speed.
- Working in mists, aerosols, or other environments containing eye irritants. Stay out of the area, if you can. If you must be there, identify the irritants. Review the MSDS for them and take the required protective measures.

Review and discussion

1. Why should you protect your eyes? *[Note to Presenter: If everyone understood this, eye protection would not be a compliance issue. So, it's a good point for discussion. How will you earn a living if your unsafe acts leave you blinded? What else would you miss if you lost the use of your eyes?]*

2. What is the simplest way to protect your eyes from most dangers on the job?
3. What are some issues with wearing safety glasses, and what should you do to ensure those glasses protect your eyes?
4. What's the proper way to apply and remove probes when making a voltage measurement? What's wrong with sticking both probes in place at once? What if you can't clip onto something with the one probe? *[Note to Presenter: A DMM manufacturer has an excellent video on this topic. Ideally, you will use one hand only. But in some circumstances, that is not an option. In those cases, work one probe at a time. Pause between probe moves. For example, if you lift the left probe, pull it all the way back from the measuring point before lifting the right probe. Do not lift two probes at the same time. A trail of ions can form between them, causing a short circuit between phases.]*
5. How can failure to properly isolate energy sources in a panel pose a threat to your eyes?
6. Suppose you enter a room that contains various chemicals used for water treatment. You aren't working with those chemicals. All you're doing is installing some receptacles. What PPE should you wear? Do you need to locate the eyewash? What other precautions might you take, if any?
7. If people are welding near your location, what precautions should you take?
8. If you are simply walking past an area where welding is taking place, what are some things you should not do? What are some things you can do to help protect your eyes?
9. How can you protect your eyes from grinding particles?
10. How can you protect your eyes from airborne irritants, such as chemical mists or oil fumes?

Participant's Signature and Date

[illegible]