Agriculture: Eye Protection



Safety Talk

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Our vision is one of the most important senses we have. Unfortunately, there is a long list of hazards that can easily affect our sensitive eyes. Many duties put us at risk for eye-damage: grinding, drilling, sawing, spray-painting, working in a fine-particle filled environment, working with hand or power tools, or handling chemicals, to name a few. Without the proper protection, you could suffer irreparable damage from mild vision impairment to complete blindness.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

It only takes a split second for our eyes to suffer the damage of outside elements. Many hidden threats can put you at risk if you neglect to wear the appropriate protection, this includes bystanders. There is the danger of exposing your eyes to projectiles such as dust, wood, metal, concrete and several other flying particles can strike, abrade, or even penetrate the eye. When working with chemicals, you risk severe burns. The light of a welding arc and even exposure to the sun can cause permanent damage to your eyes.

EXAMPLE

A farmer was attempting a quick job removing a worn-out bolt with a cutting wheel. The bolt is extremely worn and rusted, so he proceeds to cut it down the center. A piece of the weak bolt breaks off and flies into his unprotected eye, causing permanent blindness.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

The five different types of eye protection and their purposes:

1. **Safety Glasses** – The heavy lenses of safety glasses offer protection from flying particles, as they can withstand the shock of impact. However, these do not protect debris from accessing the eye around and behind the lens. If you require prescription glasses, it is advised to wear impact resistant lenses.
2. **Safety Goggles** – Fitted with the same heavy lens, these offer more protection from side impact. It is recommended you wear safety goggles when working with chemicals, striking hardened metal tools and surfaces, and working with wood.
3. **Face Shields** – These can be found with impact resistant shields, but they are most often used to protect the face against splashing, dust, and chaff. Wear a

pair of safety glasses or goggles underneath the shield if you suspect the risk of flying particles.

4. **Sunglasses** – Wear sunglasses when working in the sun. It is not just chemicals or flying debris that causes damage to the eyes. The dangers of UV rays can be just as severe as those caused by working with tools and chemicals.

When welding, there are a few things to know:

5. **Welding Helmets** – These are made specifically to protect the individual from the multiple dangers of welding. Welders must be protected from not only the splatter of molten metal and slag, but the damaging rays of the welding arc. The helmets are equipped with a coloured lens to ensure protection from the light. It is important to consult your welder's instruction manual, as there are specific shades for the different levels of currents used. For example, a No. 10 shade is necessary when working with 200 amperes or less. For oxyacetylene welders, be sure you are wearing No. 5 or 6 lenses for welding and cutting, and a No. 3 or 4 for brazing.

FINAL WORD

The loss of vision will rob you of enjoying the beauty and memories created by a lifetime of vision. Do not jeopardize yours or another's sight by neglecting to be diligent. It only takes a second to throw on the eye protection necessary for the task at hand, be sure not to skip it.