

Prevent Injuries to Your Eyes

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How could you function without your sight? According to statistics from the United States Eye Injury Registry, eye injury is the leading cause of blindness, second only to cataracts. Eyes are the second most common area of injury in farm work. Wearing approved eye protection can reduce the possibility of experiencing damage to your eyes and vision. You can choose from safety glasses, safety goggles or full-face shields. All OSHA approved types of eye protection will have ANSI (American National Standards Institute) Z87.1 logo on them or on the package. Regular eyeglasses or sunglasses do not provide the same protection. You can get prescription safety eyeglasses that meet the ANSI Z87.1 standard.

This time of year, many farmers are busy in farm shops doing equipment repairs and maintenance. Some of these shop tasks can put your eyes at risk. You should always wear eye protection around shop machines such as grinders, drill presses, chop saws, table saws, etc. Farm machinery with unshielded rotating parts can cause objects to be thrown. Eye injuries are more likely to occur when repairing farm machinery than when operating it. Using simple hand tools can cause eye injuries if you are not using approved eye protection while performing tasks such as striking hardened surfaces, grinding or using table saws. Eye pokes are a common injury experienced by orchard workers that do not wear eye protection when pruning branches or harvesting fruit. Keep eye protection readily available at shop machines or other sources of eye hazards so that it is convenient to use. Encourage workers and family members to use safety eyewear whenever they are performing tasks that put their eyes at risk. If you are the farm owner or farm manager, set the standard and lead by example by using eye protection regularly. Safety eyewear is very inexpensive, especially when you compare it to the cost of dealing with an eye injury. How much is your eyesight worth to you?

Chemical splashes can cause serious eye injuries. When handling chemicals, it is best to use splash proof goggles to protect your eyes. Wearing a face shield over splash proof goggles will give you the best protection against chemical splashes. If you do not have one, consider obtaining an emergency eye wash station or portable eye flush kit. Make sure all workers know the location of the eye wash station, a source of fresh clean water, and the emergency procedure. In the event of a chemical splash, the affected eye should be flushed for at least 15 minutes. Check the label or the product's Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) to determine what solution should be used to flush eyes. Some chemicals should not be flushed with water. Seek medical attention immediately, and take the label or container of the chemical with you. MSDS sheets can be obtained for free from the manufacturer or there are also many websites that allow you to download MSDS's for free.

Glare can also be harmful to eyes. Always use a welding helmet with at least a number 10-shade lens. The helmet will protect your eyes as well as your face and neck from the

burning rays of the arc and splattering molten metal. When chipping slag, protect your eyes, (and those of bystanders) with goggles or a helmet lens. The sun's ultraviolet rays are another source of potential eye damage. The best protection is wearing sunglasses with a 100 percent UV rating. Check for the UV rating sticker when purchasing sunglasses.

If you are looking for a good source of eye protection, the NYCAMH (The New York Center for Agricultural Medicine & Health) personal protective equipment catalog offers many types of safety glasses and sunglasses, as well as hearing protection, respirators, hard hats, SMV emblems, Tyvek suits and nitrile gloves. For more information on protecting your eyes, obtaining MSDS's or if you wish to schedule a free on-farm safety survey or an on-farm safety training session, contact Jim Carrabba, Agricultural Safety Specialist, at (800) 343-7527 extension 239, or e-mail jcarrabba@nycamh.com. NYCAMH, a program of Bassett Healthcare Network, is enhancing agricultural and rural health by preventing and treating occupational injury and illness.