

## **Computers and cell phones can be eye hazards too!**

Computer vision syndrome (CVS), also referred to as digital eye strain, describes a group of eye- and vision-related problems that result from prolonged computer, tablet, e-reader, and cell phone use.

Viewing a computer or digital screen often makes the eyes work harder, leading to strain. Other factors include poor lighting, poor posture, and improper viewing distances

### **The most common symptoms associated with CVS are:**

- Eyestrain
- Headaches
- Blurred vision
- Dry eyes
- Neck and shoulder pain

While CVS doesn't seem to cause permanent damage, it can make using your computer or cell phone very uncomfortable.

### **Prevention Strategies:**

- Cut the glare on your screen: Change your lighting, move your desk, or install a glare filter on your screen if necessary
- Rearrange your desk: Position your monitor slightly below eye level and about 20" – 28" from your face
- Give your eyes a break and follow the 20-20-20 Rule: Every 20 minutes, look at something that's about 20 feet away for about 20 seconds



## ***Seeing the Light: The Importance of Eye Protection***

The original Eye and Face Protection Standard was adopted by OSHA in 1971 and has been updated many times as technology and consensus standards improve. ANSI standards have been updated even more often throughout the years, ensuring levels of comfort and performance for eye and face protection that would have seemed like science fiction to previous generations. With all this advanced protection it seems like eye injuries would be a thing of the past, right? Unfortunately, about 2,000 eye injuries occur in the workplace each day, leading lost worktime, pain, permanent damage, and blindness. So what's going on here?

The simplest way to avoid becoming a statistic is to just put on the right eye protection before you start work! I know it sounds obvious, but the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that three out of every five workers who sustained an eye injury reported that they were NOT wearing any eye protection at the time of their incident. The reason most often given was that they didn't think eye protection was necessary for the task.

OSHA requires eye and face protection anytime you're exposed to hazards such as flying particles, molten metal, liquid chemicals, acids or caustic liquids, chemical gases or vapors, or potentially injurious light radiation. Side shields must be used on glasses where there are flying object hazards, and prescription glasses must either be covered by appropriate safety glasses or designed to withstand eye hazards. In other words, if something could hit you in the face or eyes, you should be wearing protection.

Just as important to this conversation is comfort. Many times, workers avoid wearing eye protection because it doesn't fit correctly, slides around on their face, fogs up in humid conditions, or becomes easily scratched and difficult to see through. Remember, cheaply made eye protection won't help if people would rather risk an injury than wear it. Nowadays, it's possible to find eye protection with features like anti-fog and scratch resistant coatings, light-weight frames, and padding for every budget.

So, you've chosen to wear eye protection – you should be safe now, right? No so fast. 40 percent of eye injuries occurred when the worker was wearing some form of eye protection. It's not just about wearing anything; it's about wearing the RIGHT protection.

Before you start a task, assess the risks, and identify the types of eye hazards that might be present. Can you use guarding or other engineering methods to isolate the hazard or eliminate it entirely? If this is a regularly occurring task, why not develop a standard operating procedure that lists the eye hazards present and the precautions you should take?

Choosing the right PPE will often depend on the severity of the hazard. Safety glasses with side shields might be enough protection for basic tasks with minor dust hazards or the occasional flying particle, but goggles are more effective when you know you'll be exposed to heavy streams of flying particles, large amounts of dust, or any type of splash hazard. Don't forget about your face! In addition to eye protection, you'll need to cover your face whenever you could be injured.

When you're ready to take off your eye and face protection, don't forget to brush, shake, or vacuum any remaining dust or debris from your hard hat, hair, forehead, or face shield suspension. Many people have made it all the way to the end of a task only to get something in their eye at the last minute. Also avoid rubbing your eyes and face with dirty hands or clothing.

Finally, if you do get something in your eyes, resist the urge to rub them! Use eye wash or artificial tears to remove particles. Get medical attention if you feel pain, experience blurred vision, or if the particle won't come out. For chemical exposures, immediately flush the eye for at least 15 minutes and seek medical attention. Don't take a chance when it comes to your eyes!