



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

Weekly Safety Meeting

Personal Protective Equipment – Foot Protection

Foot protection means guarding your toes, ankles and feet from injury. Believe it or not, your feet have 26 bones for support and 38 joints for movement in each foot. Feet also have blood vessels, ligaments, muscles, and nerves, which is why it hurts when you stub your toe or drop something on your foot. Your feet are a critical part of your body that you use every day and, in some cases, enable you to do your job effectively.

There are two major categories of work-related foot injuries. The first category includes foot injuries from punctures, crushing, sprains, and lacerations, and accounts for 10% of all reported disabling injuries.

The second group of injuries includes those resulting from slips, trips, and falls. They account for 15% of all reported disabling injuries. Slips and falls do not always result in a foot injury but lack of attention to foot safety plays an important role in their occurrence.

These two categories of foot injuries, however, do not exhaust the whole range of foot problems at work. There are also other conditions such as calluses, ingrown toenails, or simply tired feet that are common among workers. Although these may not be considered as occupational injuries in the strictest sense, they can have serious consequences for health and safety at the workplace. They cause discomfort, pain, and fatigue. Fatigue sets up the worker for further injuries affecting the muscles and joints. Also, a worker who is tired and suffering pain is less alert and more likely to act unsafely. An accident or incident of any kind may result.

When choosing safety footwear, you must select the legally approved shoe or boot required for the job activity, equipment, and situation. Some situations may require metal-toed boots to protect the top part of the foot. These steel-toed shoes provide extra protection over the top of the foot and can make a difference in preventing an injury in an accident.

Assessing the Environment:

First, assess the work environment to determine any possible foot hazards and how you can protect against them. This assessment is important in a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) program because it helps you choose the right footwear for each job and hazard.

Typical foot hazards to look for during your assessment are sharp objects from tools or raw materials; falling or rolling objects like boxes, materials, carts, and equipment; wet, slippery surfaces from spills or bad weather; electrical shock; hot surfaces like paving or welding; and cold surfaces and environments such as snow, ice, and refrigeration.

American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) Standard:

When it comes to choosing work boots, it's imperative that you find a boot that meets the applicable federal and state safety standards.

Selecting a pair of work boots that follows these safety standards can make a significant difference in injury prevention while also offering peace of mind – not to mention meeting compliance requirements for your job.

The protective footwear you choose must comply with the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standard F2413-05, formerly the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI) Z41-1999. This standard covers minimum requirements for the design, performance, testing, and classification of protective footwear.

Footwear certified as meeting ASTM F2413-05 must first meet the requirements of Section 5.1 "Impact Resistant Footwear" and Section 5.2 "Compression Resistant Footwear." Then the requirements of additional sections such as metatarsal protection, conductive protection, electric shock protection, static dissipative protection, and protection against punctures can be met.

Caring for Your Feet:

Feet are subject to a great variety of skin and toenail disorders. Workers can avoid many of them by following simple rules of foot care:

- Wash feet daily with soap, rinse thoroughly and dry, especially between the toes.
- Trim toenails straight across and not too short. Do not cut into the corners.
- Wear clean socks or stockings and change them daily.

Some feet sweat more than others and are more prone to athlete's foot. Again, following a few simple guidelines may help:

- Select shoes made of leather or canvas – not synthetic materials.
- Keep several pairs of shoes on hand and rotate shoes daily to allow them to air out.
- For some workers, non-colored woolen or cotton socks may be recommended since dyes may cause or aggravate skin allergies.
- Use foot powder. If problems persist, see a doctor or health care specialist.

In cases of persisting ingrown toenails, calluses, corns, fungal infection, and more serious conditions such as flat feet and arthritis, see a doctor and follow the doctor's advice.

Summary:

Investing in work boots that meet federal and state safety standards is not always cheap but investing in the proper safety footwear can save you more serious injuries. No matter what job you're tackling, it's important to always have confidence in the work boots you're wearing.

KEEP A GOOD FOOTING ON LIFE... WEAR SAFETY SHOES!
