CESA
CONVALESCENT EMPLOYERS SAFETY ASSOCIATION

Step Up to Safety

Structurally, our feet are well designed; they are made up of 26 bones with almost no cushioning or protective muscle layers surrounding them. This makes the unprotected foot extremely vulnerable to many types of injuries, especially with dangers in construction work. In a typical year, many disabling foot injuries occur, and many of these injuries could have been prevented if proper foot protection was used.

There's no footwear that is able to protect against all injuries. The best option is to be proactive by identifying and assessing all foot hazards that may exist at the worksite. Then require the proper foot protection be worn in those areas, use engineering controls when possible, and always enforce safe work practices.

California's General Industry Safety Orders require foot protection to be worn if workers are exposed to foot injuries from electrical hazards, hot, corrosive, poisonous substances, falling (or rolling) objects, crushing (from heavy loads or equipment) or penetrating actions (from nails, glass, metal, etc.) or if workers are required to work in abnormally wet locations.

When evaluating safety footwear, it's important to insist on the correct ANSI (American National Standards Institute) rated foot protection for the hazards that apply. Here are some key factors to consider when choosing foot protection.

- Impact or compression protection - Steel-toed footwear provides protection over the top of the foot to protect against falling, rolling, or crushing objects if workers carry or handle heavy materials or tools. However, where there are electrical hazards, a fiberglass toe should replace the steel toe. For added foot protection, the outer soles should resist water, oil, solvents or heat.
- Safety footwear with puncture protection should be required when a worker is around sharp objects such as nails, wire, tacks, screws, staples, scrap metal, etc. Practicing good housekeeping procedures is another way to prevent puncture injuries.
- Good traction should be considered to protect against slips and falls. Although most safety footwear offers some slip resistance, traction can be increased when shoes have abrasive soles or treads with many small grooves or cleats- if they're kept free of dirt or mud buildup.
- Consider protection from electrical and explosive hazards. Footwear of this nature may be conductive, to prevent static electricity buildup, non-sparking, and if dealing with explosives; wear nonconductive protective footwear. Electrical hazard shoes are designed to work when they're dry and in good repair; protection is diminished when they are wet or if there's an accumulation of dirt.

Last, but not least, shoe comfort should be a factor to make sure employees wear the foot protection. Since the foot is something that does not get much attention unless there is a problem, it is important to take proper preventative steps right from the start to avoid injuries.

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