

## **Safety Spectacles and Goggles Have Come a Long Way; We Just Need to Wear Them**

By Erica Osley  
Director of Marketing  
Eye and Face Protection  
Uvex by Sperian  
Smithfield, R.I.

It's hard to think of any workplace where we do not face a danger from eye injuries due to flying objects, glare, liquids, splashes, UV or IR radiation or other hazards. In case you hadn't noticed, safety spectacles and goggles have come a long way to protect us against these hazards.

OSHA has very strict rules regarding protective eyewear. 29 CFR 1910.133 mandates which type of protective eyewear we have to wear, and covers an employer's general responsibility. OSHA specifies the ANSI Z87.1-2003 standard as the source of guidance in selecting eyewear for specific activities, for example, welding, chipping, grinding or handling of chemicals.

According to one of the most important general requirements of 1910.133, "Every affected employee must be given appropriate eye or face protection if they are exposed to eye or face hazards from flying particles, molten metal, liquid chemicals, acids or caustic liquids, chemical vapors or gases or potentially injurious light radiation."

As one of the leading manufacturers of protective eyewear, Bacou-Dalloz strives to continually "push the envelope" when it comes to developing safety spectacles and goggles. We are especially focused on improving protective eyewear to encourage its wear through a combination of style, performance and comfort.

Today's protective eyewear is produced with virtually no lens distortion, providing excellent optics and allowing the eyewear to be worn for long periods of time without compliant. Lenses are available with permanently bonded anti-fog and anti-scratch coatings. Or, consider indoor-outdoor versions that allow you to easily move from outdoors to the warehouse with lenses that have a subtle mirror coating to balance light levels. Or, what about tinted lenses for easy recognition of traffic signals or for performing specialized tasks in the workplace?

Most of today's safety spectacle lenses are optical grade polycarbonate. Significantly more impact-resistant and 50 percent lighter in weight than tempered glass, they provide a much wider margin of protection. Polycarbonate can be economically molded into a variety of shapes, with excellent optical clarity and built-in ultra-violet filtration. It allows the products to meet rigid requirements called out in ANSI, CSA and other global protective eyewear standards.

Styling is now a key feature of protective eyewear. Manufacturers have eliminated cumbersome and separate sideshields by incorporating them into the frame's temple components, or into the lens itself. This gives the wearer a much greater field of vision. Similar advances have been made with safety goggles, which also serve as primary eye protection. (Faceshields are considered to be secondary protectors, with spectacles or goggles to be worn underneath). Remember however, regardless of the design or style, eyewear only protects if it is worn!

Today's protective eyewear is available in many configurations for virtually any application. If you wear a prescription, you may either obtain prescription safety glasses (usually with sideshields), or wear an OTG (Over the Glass) model that fits over your regular prescription spectacles. Uvex Safety, a Bacou-Dalloz brand, recently introduced an Rx insert that can be fitted with a wearer's specific prescription and then will attach right into the Uvex XC® frame. This design eliminates the bulkiness of an OTG safety spectacle over your own prescription eyewear.

You may be shocked to know that 68 percent of all employees who should be using protective eyewear do not. That's according to the Industrial Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) and *Compliance* magazine. Other research revealed that only two-thirds of employees suffering eye injuries in the U.S. said protective eyewear was provided at their site. A revealing study of North American road construction use of personal protective equipment (PPE) commissioned by ISEA, found that only 53 percent of those workers regularly use safety glasses and goggles.

The main reason why they don't, according to the study? Because employers do not require or enforce PPE use. Other barriers to PPE cited by the 215 respondents included "lack of style/comfort," "hampers job performances," "expense of equipment to employees," "laborers aren't informed on importance of equipment," "apathetic" and "inattentive."

We all have to do a better job with eye protection for obvious reasons. What are some of the things we can do?

As employers we must—at the very least—comply with regulations. We need to make eye protection readily available to our employees, train them in its proper use and implement an effective program to ensure that eyewear is being worn. At Bacou-Dalloz, we've found that it is a good idea to offer employees a choice of compliant eyewear and allow them to select the models that they want to wear. That way, they participate in the decision and define a range of products that fit their needs and their varying head shapes.

Employees may also appreciate safety glass accessories such as cords or retainers. This allows them to keep the eyewear with them for use when needed. Many retainers are designed to break away instantly if they should become entangled in machinery. Storage cases and cleaning solutions are also available to protect the eyewear "off duty" and to keep lenses clear for optimum vision.

As employees, we simply need to recognize that there is virtually no workplace free from eye hazards. It makes sense to wear eye protection whenever we're on the job. OSHA regulations dictate that workplace hazards assessments should be conducted, and eyewear is provided where needed.

Do your part to reduce the number of eye injuries by strongly urging your employees and co-workers to not only protect their eyes, but to wear protection appropriate for the hazards they may face.

\*As published in Aug. 2005

# # #