

# **Preventing Eye Injuries in the Workplace**

The American Academy Of Ophthalmology

## Workplace Eye Injuries by the Numbers

 **20,300**

Number of on-the-job eye injuries that forced employees to take time off work in 2012

 **\$300 million**

Estimated yearly cost of occupational eye injuries in medical treatment, worker's compensation and loss of productivity

 **90**

Percent of workplace eye injuries that are preventable with protective eyewear

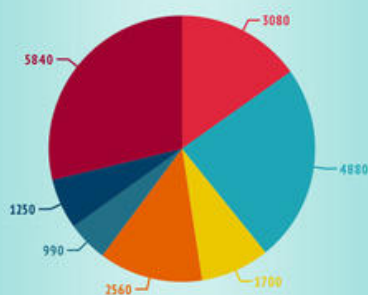


## Eye Injuries by Industry

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40% of all non-fatal workplace eye injuries happen in manufacturing, construction and mining

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012



Construction Manufacturing Health care and social assistance  
Retail trade Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting  
Leisure and hospitality Other industries



To learn how to prevent and treat eye injuries at work, visit [www.geteyesmart.org](http://www.geteyesmart.org).



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# Preventing Eye Injuries in the Workplace

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Each year, 300,000 Americans visit the emergency room to treat a workplace eye injury.<sup>[i]</sup> [1] A significant portion of eye injuries occur in manufacturing, construction, and mining, industries which are experiencing recent job growth. During Workplace Eye Wellness Month in March, the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#) [2] is reminding employers and workers in these fields about the importance of wearing eye protection.

According to the February jobs report, the U.S. added 48,000 jobs in construction, 21,000 jobs in manufacturing and 7,000 in mining in January. About 40 percent of eye injuries in the workplace happen in these three industries, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.<sup>[ii]</sup> [3] In total, all workplace eye injuries cost an estimated \$300 million a year in lost productivity, medical treatment and worker compensation.<sup>[iii]</sup> [4] Injuries range from simple strain to severe trauma, which can cause permanent damage and blindness, but 90 percent of workplace eye injuries are preventable with the appropriate eye protection.

The Academy's public education website EyeSmart® provides the following [tips](#) [5] for avoiding eye injuries at work:

- Wear [protective eyewear](#) [6] whenever there is a chance of eye injury such as anywhere there may be flying debris, falling objects, chemicals and intense light and heat. This is particularly true of workers involved in welding. Among welders, their assistants, and nearby workers, UV radiation burns (welder's flash) routinely damage workers' eyes and surrounding tissue.
- Make sure your eye protection is American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-approved, OSHA compliant, and is appropriate for the hazards in your workplace. If you are working in an area that has particles, flying objects or dust, you must at least wear safety glasses with side protection (side shields). If you are working with chemicals, you should wear goggles. If you are working near hazardous radiation (welding, lasers or fiber optics) you must use special-purpose safety glasses, goggles, face shields or helmets designed for that task.

In case of an eye injury, follow the EyeSmart® [Care and Treatment Recommendations for Eye Injury](#) [7] to learn the dos and don'ts of eye injury first aid:

- If your eye has been cut or punctured:
  - DO NOT: Remove the object stuck in eye, rinse with water, rub or apply pressure to eye. Avoid giving aspirin, ibuprofen or other non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs. These drugs thin the blood and may increase bleeding.
  - DO: Gently place a shield over the eye. The bottom of a paper cup taped to the bones surrounding the eye can serve as a shield until you get medical attention. After you have finished protecting the eye, see a physician immediately.

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- In case of a chemical burn to the eye: immediately flush the eye with plenty of clean water, and seek emergency medical treatment right away.
- To treat a blow to the eye: DO NOT apply any pressure. DO gently apply a small cold compress to reduce pain and swelling. If a black eye, pain or visual disturbance occurs even after a light blow, immediately contact an ophthalmologist—a medical doctor specializing in the diagnosis, medical and surgical treatment of eye diseases and condition—or emergency room. Remember that even a light blow can cause a significant eye injury.
- To treat sand or small debris in the eye: DO NOT rub the eye. DO use eyewash to flush the eye out. If the debris doesn't come out, lightly bandage the eye and see an ophthalmologist or visit the nearest emergency room.

"As Ben Franklin once said, 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,'" said ophthalmologist Anne Summers, M.D., clinical spokesperson for the Academy. "It takes very little effort to protect yourself from on-the-job hazards that can cause blinding eye injuries. We strongly advise workers and their employers not to let their guard down when it comes to wearing proper eye protection."

For more eye injury first aid tips and information about workplace eye safety, visit [www.eyesmart.org](http://www.eyesmart.org) [8].

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**[For more food industry news, click here](#)** [9]

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[1] [http://www.aao.org/newsroom/release/industrial-workplace-eye-injuries.cfm#\\_edn1](http://www.aao.org/newsroom/release/industrial-workplace-eye-injuries.cfm#_edn1)

[2] <http://www.aao.org/>

[3] [http://www.aao.org/newsroom/release/industrial-workplace-eye-injuries.cfm#\\_edn2](http://www.aao.org/newsroom/release/industrial-workplace-eye-injuries.cfm#_edn2)

[4] [http://www.aao.org/newsroom/release/industrial-workplace-eye-injuries.cfm#\\_edn3](http://www.aao.org/newsroom/release/industrial-workplace-eye-injuries.cfm#_edn3)

[5] <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/living/eye-injuries-work.cfm>

[6] <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/living/protective-eyewear.cfm>

[7] <http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/living/eye-injuries-care-treatment.cfm>

[8] <http://www.eyesmart.org/>

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