WEEK 34 AUGUST · ~5 MIN READ · ONTARIO CONSTRUCTION

Eye Protection

A metal chip off a grinder or a splash of concrete slurry can injure an eye in a fraction of a second — and unlike a cut on your hand, eye damage often doesn't fully heal. Safety glasses are the cheapest insurance on site. Knowing what to do in the first minute after a splash is the other half.

The hazard

Grinding, cutting, drilling, nailing, and chipping fling debris straight at face height. Dust, wood chips, concrete splatter, and chemical splashes all do real damage, and even a small particle under the eyelid can scratch the eye and put you off work. UV from welding and from the August sun burns eyes too.

Ontario's requirement is **protection appropriate to the risk** — which means the answer changes with the task rather than being one pair of glasses for the whole day. Choose it against the hazard, the manufacturer's guidance, and for chemicals, the safety data sheet.

What to do

- **Wear eye protection marked or certified to the applicable CSA standard** whenever there's flying debris, dust, or splash — which is most of the day. The marking is what tells you it's rated; a hardware-store lens with no marking isn't.
- **Step up to sealed goggles** for fine dust, chemical splash, and wet cutting, where things get around the sides of glasses.
- **Face shield over glasses for heavy grinding and cutting.** The shield protects your face; the glasses protect your eyes. **A shield alone is not eye protection** — keep the glasses on underneath.
- **Use the right welding shade**, and don't watch someone else weld with bare eyes.
- **Keep lenses clean and swap them when scratched.** People lift eyewear they can't see through, and that's when the chip arrives.

If something gets in an eye

- **Chemical splash: flush immediately and keep flushing** — at the eyewash or with clean running water, eyelid held open, for a good long stretch rather than a quick rinse. Then get medical attention, and **take the product's data sheet or label with you.**
- **Know where the nearest eyewash is before you open the product**, not while you're squinting.
- **Don't rub**, and **don't try to remove anything embedded** — cover the eye lightly and get medical help.
- Grit or dust that won't flush out, ongoing pain, light sensitivity, or blurred vision all mean getting seen the same day. "It'll work its way out" is how a scratch becomes an ulcer.
- Report it, even when it seems minor.

Watch out for

- Glasses pushed up on a forehead "just for this one cut." That's exactly when chips fly.
- Standing in the line of fire while someone nearby is grinding or cutting.
- Scratched, fogged, or badly fitting eyewear — nobody keeps that on.

- A face shield being worn on its own.

Talk it over

- Which of today's tasks need goggles or a shield rather than glasses — and for anything chemical, has anyone read the data sheet?
- Where's the nearest eyewash from where we're working, and how long would it take to get to it?

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