Protect Your Feet

Your feet are particularly vulnerable to injury on the job. Mechanical hazards, falling objects, compression from rolling objects and punctures are the top causes of foot injury. Other foot hazards include: slipping, exposure to chemicals, extreme cold and heat, electrical shock and wetness.

Mechanical Hazards

Standard safety shoes come in a variety of types, styles, materials and weights. They're comfortable and many look like street shoes. They have steel, reinforced plastic or hard rubber toes. Typically, they'll have steel toe caps to guard against injuries from falling objects and compression, and instep protection of aluminum, steel, fiber or plastic to protect the top of your foot. Steel insoles or reinforced metal soles protect from puncture.

Electrical Hazards

Conductive shoes permit the static electricity that builds up in your body to drain off harmlessly into the ground. For high-voltage hazards, use conductive shoes: insulated shoes with a connector from calf to heel to pass electricity to the floor or ground. Wear safety shoes with leather, cork or other conductive soles and no exposed metal. For protection against live electrical current, shoes must have rubber soles. Electrical hazard shoes must be kept dry.

Chemical Hazards

Many chemicals and solvents can burn or eat away ordinary shoe materials. For protection from these hazards, wear rubber, neoprene or plastic footwear depending on your company's policy and the type of chemical you're exposed to. Rubber or plastic safety boots can protect your feet against oil, water, acids, corrosives and other industrial chemicals. They're available with steel toe caps, puncture-resistant insoles and metatarsal guards.

Extreme Heat or Cold

In extreme cold, wear shoes with moisture-proof insulation and insulated socks. Wool socks provide greater warmth than cotton in cold weather. Icy surfaces may require strap-on cleats. Wooden-soled shoes or slip-on sandals protect against heat; surfaces too hot for wood soles require aluminized heat-protective shoes or boots. When working around molten metal and sparks, use foundry boots with elastic gores for quick removal in case hot metal or sparks get inside.

Wetness

To protect against slipping on wet or oily surfaces, wear shoes with wooden soles or cleated, nonslip rubber or neoprene soles. Hip boots, also called waders, are ideal for working in water over a foot deep.

Concrete Work

For concrete work, special protective shoe coverings are necessary. You must use overshoes that won't be pulled off by the concrete. Overshoes with buckles will keep the shoes from falling off. Always wear overshoes or boots that are higher than the depth of the concrete to prevent cement from seeping into the shoes and causing cement infection.

YOU AND YOUR SHOES

- ► Be sure your safety shoes are approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The rating should be stamped inside your shoes.
- ► Wear appropriate footwear for the job.
- ► Wear the right size shoe. Tight shoes result in cold feet and pinched toes. Loose shoes can make you stumble or turn an ankle.
- ► Choose shoes you can wear comfortably for hours.
- ► Keep your shoes clean and dry.
- ► Inspect your shoes regularly for cuts, cracks and embedded metal.
- ► Replace your shoes when they get worn out.
- ► Be on the lookout for hazardous conditions and equipment.