

Footwear Safety

Toolbox Talk

Protective footwear is designed to protect the foot from physical hazards in the workplace, such as falling objects, stepping on sharp objects, heat and cold, wet and slippery surfaces, and exposure to corrosive chemicals. As a worker, you should know the risks in your workplace and consider the safety hazards in your work area when selecting footwear so that you can select the appropriate type of protective footwear. You can also ask your supervisor what protective footwear and other personal protective equipment is required.

When purchasing new protective footwear, it's important to get the right fit and comfort so the shoes will not cause calluses, ingrown toenails, or tired feet.

These ailments are common among workers who spend most of their working time standing or do a lot of walking. Although these ailments may not be considered occupational injuries, they can have serious consequences for health and safety at the workplace.

They can cause discomfort, pain, and fatigue, which can lead to an injury that affects the muscles and joints.

Also, a worker who is tired and suffering pain is less alert and more likely to act unsafely, which can cause an accident.

Before wearing new shoes or boots on the job, wear them at home until you're sure they're the right fit. To avoid problems with returns or exchanges, make sure to keep the shoes clean while deciding if they're the right fit, and always check the store's return policy prior to purchasing footwear.

What Should I Know About Safety Footwear?

- If you are at risk for foot injury at your workplace, you should wear the appropriate protective footwear.
- If foot protection is required in your workplace, your employer should implement a complete foot safety protection program including: selection, fit testing, training, maintenance, and inspection of footwear.
- Safety footwear is designed to protect feet against a wide variety of injuries like impact, compression, and puncture, which are the most common types of foot injury.
- Choose footwear according to the hazards in your workplace.

- Ensure that the footwear has the proper sole for the working conditions.
- Use metatarsal (top of the foot between the toes and ankle) protection where there is a potential for injury.

What Built-in Protection Features Come in Safety Footwear?

- High-cut shoes or boots provide ankle support and keep sparks, molten metals, and chemicals from getting into the footwear.
- Reinforced safety toe, reinforced toecap, or steel toecap footwear will absorb the blow if a heavy object falls on the foot.
- Reinforced metal soles and steel midsoles protect feet from punctures.
- Non-slip footwear prevents the wearer from slipping on some surface types.
- Insulated footwear provides protection in cold temperatures.

Are there Special Shoes or Boots for Special Working Conditions?

- Metal-free footwear is recommended when working around electricity.
- Footwear with rubber or wooden soles is recommended for traction on wet floors.
- Treated footwear is resistant to chemicals and corrosives and is recommended when working with those substances.

What Should I Know About the Fit and Care of Safety Footwear?

Fit

- Walk in new footwear to ensure fit and comfort.
- Shoes/boots should have ample toe room (toes should be about ½ inch from the front).
- Make allowances for socks or special arch supports when buying shoes/boots.
- Shoes/boots should fit snugly around the heel and ankle when laced.
- Lace up shoes/boots fully to ensure comfort.

Source: Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation

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Care

- Apply a protective coating to make footwear water-resistant.
- Inspect footwear regularly for damage.
- Repair or replace worn or defective footwear.

How Should I Care for My Feet?

Feet are subject to a great variety of skin and toenail disorders. Workers can avoid many of them by following simple rules of foot care:

- Wash feet daily with soap, rinse thoroughly and dry, especially between the toes.
- Trim toenails straight across and not too short; do not cut into the corners of the nail.
- Wear clean socks or stockings and change them daily.

Some feet sweat more than others and are more prone to athlete's foot. Again, following a few simple guidelines may help:

- Select shoes made of leather or canvas - not synthetic materials.
- Keep several pairs of shoes on hand and rotate shoes daily to allow them to air out.
- For some workers, non-colored wool or cotton socks may be recommended since dyes may cause or aggravate skin allergies.
- Use foot powder.
- See a doctor for persistent ingrown toenails, calluses, corns, fungal infection and more serious conditions such as flat feet and arthritis.

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Training Log

Company Name: _____

Name of Trainer: _____

Date of Training: _____

Employee Name (printed)	Employee Signature