



## Just the Facts... When to Supply Prescription Safety Glasses

1. The following regulatory documents apply to prescription safety glasses, non-prescription (plano) safety glasses, and plano safety protection worn over non-safety prescription glasses:

**a. Federal law: 29 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 1910.132:** "Application. Protective equipment, including personal protective equipment for eyes, face, head, and extremities, protective clothing, respiratory devices, and protective shields and barriers, shall be provided, used, and maintained in a sanitary and reliable condition wherever it is necessary by reason of hazards of processes or environment, chemical hazards, radiological hazards, or mechanical irritants encountered in a manner capable of causing injury or impairment in the function of any part of the body through absorption, inhalation or physical contact."

**b. Federal law: 29 CFR 1910.133:** "The employer shall ensure that each affected employee who wears prescription lenses while engaged in operations that involve eye hazards wears eye protection that incorporates the prescription in its design, or wears eye protection that can be worn over the prescription lenses without disturbing the proper position of the prescription lenses or the protective lenses."

**c. Army: Army Regulation (AR) 385-10, Chapter 6-2:** "When required, PCE (protective clothing and equipment) will be furnished by the unit or activity at no cost to personnel."

**d. Army: Technical Bulletin Medical (TB MED) 506, Dec 1981, Chapter 4, para 4-1.c:** "Eye protection shall meet the following minimum requirements:

- (1) Provide adequate protection against the particular hazards for which they were designed.
- (2) Reasonably comfortable when worn under the designated conditions.
- (3) Fit snugly and not unduly interfere with the movements of the wearer."

**e. Navy: Chief, Naval Operations Instruction (OPNAVINST) 5100.23D, Oct 94, Chapter 19, 1901.b:** "As a minimum, the protective devices shall be adequate for the hazards specified, reasonably comfortable, and fit snugly without interfering unnecessarily with movement."

**f. Navy: OPNAVINST 5100.23D, Oct 94, Chapter 20, 2004:** "The activity is responsible for providing the required approved protective equipment and enforcing its use."

**g. Air Force: Air Force Occupational Safety and Health Instruction (AFOSHI) 91-31, Oct 97, Chapter 3,** states that eye protection: "3.1.1.1. Provide adequate protection against the particular hazards for which they are designed; 3.1.1.2. Be reasonably comfortable when worn under designated conditions; 3.1.1.3. Fit snugly without interfering with the movements or vision of the wearer; 3.1.9. Employees who wear prescription lenses will be provided eye protection that incorporates the prescription in its design, or will wear eye protection that can be worn over the prescription lenses. The protective equipment must not interfere with the wearer's vision or proper position of the protection equipment."

2. Based on the above, it is clear that in a military or Federal Government setting all necessary types of personal protective equipment (PPE) for the eyes will be provided by the employer at no cost to the employee. In some locations where provisions allow, the employer may let the employee pay the difference to upgrade their safety glasses to a higher level than is necessary. Note: Glasses for computer use only are not considered PPE.

3. Also any required eye protection must be reasonably comfortable, fit snugly, not interfere with the proper position of prescription lenses, and not interfere with the wearer's vision.

4. The Tri-Service Vision Conservation and Readiness Office at the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine suggests that prolonged wear of eye protection over a worker's normal glasses is not reasonably comfortable and may interfere with the wearer's vision. Prolonged wear is defined as ten (10) or more hours per week on a regular basis. Therefore, it is recommended that any worker who is required to wear impact resistance safety eye protection for ten (10) or more hours per week on a regular basis be provided with prescription safety glasses to wear for eye hazardous protection. Increased comfort and better vision lead to better compliance and improved job performance. It should be noted that each installation has the final decision on when to provide prescription safety glasses, as long as such decision does not violate any of the laws or rules that apply to this subject.