

CHOOSING EYE PROTECTION

Safety glasses and goggles are essential tools for protecting your sight. About 60% of eye injuries occur to persons wearing no eye protection, and 10-15% happen to those who wear the wrong protection. Use the tips below to choose wisely for yourself or your researchers.

TIPS

- Safety glasses are for impact protection. Choose safety glasses if you are likely to be hit by a flying object (tool, material chip, shrapnel from exploded apparatus, etc.). They are not for chemicals—even in small quantity. Make sure your glasses have “Z87” or “Z87+” stamped on them to ensure that they meet national standards.
- Impact safety goggles are for more comprehensive eye protection. Choose impact goggles if you are exposed to small objects like material chips and sawdust. Impact goggles are less susceptible to fogging than other types because they have ventilation holes drilled in them.
- Chemical splash goggles are for chemicals. If you are handling anything whose Safety Data Sheet includes eye hazards—from irritation to corrosive damage—use chemical splash goggles. A “little bit” of chemicals can get around safety glasses as easily as a lot, and if you are working with small amounts, those small amounts likely came from a big container.
- Laser goggles are for exposure to laser light. Wear laser goggles when you are working with Class 3 or 4 lasers—the Laser Safety Officer must choose them for you, since choosing the right pair is highly technical. If you work with both lasers and other eye hazards at the same time, contact the Lab Safety Advocate or the Department of Health, Safety, and Environment for assistance.
- Face shields are not eye protection; they’re face protection. Never substitute a face shield for proper eye protection: if you need face protection, wear the face shield over safety goggles or glasses as appropriate.
- The percentages in the first paragraph do not add to 100%—about 25% of eye injuries happen to people who were wearing appropriate eye protection. Safety equipment is not perfectly reliable, particularly “personal protective equipment” like eyewear and gloves; you should never rely on “PPE” as your sole protection unless absolutely necessary.

Not Rocket Science: A JHU Safety Note

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What eye protection is required for our lab operations?
2. Is there any time when additional or different protection would be necessary? When?
3. In what work areas should we make a “safety eyewear required at all times” rule, even for those not actively doing work? (Hint: What parts of the lab are exposed to splashes, flying objects, etc. from other people’s work or from fixed equipment?)
4. Do any of our lab operations require specialized eyewear such as laser goggles or welding shields? What are those procedures?