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## **2,000 Employees Suffer Work-related Eye Injuries Every Day in the United States**

### ***Statistics Show Younger Men Receive the Most Eye Injuries in the Workplace***

**CHICAGO (Feb. 24, 2005)** – As many as 2,000 employees in America suffer work-related eye injuries every day, and 81 percent of those cases are men. And, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, workers aged 25-44 accounted for 62 percent of eye injuries.

Getting all workers and employers to understand the importance of wearing safety goggles and glasses continues to be a challenge. More than one in four cases of eye injuries occur at work with as many as 50 percent of those injured wearing no eye protection at all.

Prevent Blindness America (PBA) has designated March as “Workplace Eye Health and Safety Month” in an effort to raise awareness about the necessity of eye safety on the job. Because they don’t feel comfortable or feel they “look good,” many workers have expressed their reluctance to wear safety glasses. PBA hopes to remind everyone that although safety glasses may not be the most fashionable accessory, they are certainly more attractive than spending a day in the emergency room, or worse.

Additionally, of those that were injured, many either didn’t think they would need eye protection, or were wearing the wrong kind. Only eye protection that has been certified by the American National Standards Institute should be used. Everyone must make sure that “ANSI Z87” is clearly stamped on the frame or lens.

Employers must make eye safety a priority. As of 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that eye injuries total more than \$300 million a year in lost production time, medical expenses and worker compensation. Therefore, in certain industries, a face shield and goggles should be absolutely mandatory to protect workers from chemical splashes, or welding light and electrical arc. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that employers ensure the safety of all employees in the work environment, including providing eye and face protection whenever necessary.

“We already know that 90 percent of all job-related eye injuries can be prevented,” said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of PBA. “When employers and workers join together to make their job sites safer, the results will be dramatic.”

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Prevent Blindness America offers the following tips to promote safety in the workplace:

- Safety eyewear must have “ANZI Z87” clearly marked on all glasses or goggles and should be worn at all times whenever eye hazards are present.
- Workers should know where the nearest eye wash station is at their job site and how to use it.
- Employers should be notified immediately if safety hazards are discovered.
- Employees should have regular eye exams to make sure their vision is adequate to do their jobs safely.
- Those who already have reduced vision should ask their employers if prescription glasses or goggles can be provided.

PBA offers several free fact sheets and brochures to safety managers and consumers: *2002 Workplace-Related Eye Injuries*, *Eye Safety is No Accident*, *Questions on Eye Safety at Work*, and *Workplace Safety Quiz*. The organization also sponsors *Wise Owl*® , a safety education program designed to promote the widespread use of approved protective eyewear that meets ANSI Z87 standards. To receive this free information, call the PBA Vision Health Resource Center at 1-800-331-2020 or visit [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org).

### **About Prevent Blindness America**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org).

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