Eyes are very delicate organs that can be easily damaged, and just behind the eye sits the brain, making it doubly important to take eye safety seriously. 72,000 Canadians sustain eye injuries requiring medical attention each year and it is estimated that 25% of all eye injuries result in missed time from work. There are no second chances when it comes to eye injuries. Following is a list of the most common eye injuries sustained at work:

- Flying objects – bits of metal, nails, glass, stone or wood
- Unsafe handling of tools
- Particles such as sand and sawdust
- Chemical splashes
- Radiation
- Sparks and slag from welding and cutting
- Pipes and wire sticking out of walls
- Objects hanging from ceilings
- Sun and wind

PRIMARY LINE OF DEFENSE
The primary defense against eye injuries is to eliminate hazards at the source. This can be done by conducting pre-job hazard assessments to identify and control existing and potential hazards. Always follow good housekeeping practices and make every effort to educate workers through regular toolbox meetings, the creation and review of safe work procedures and by ensuring that workers have, and wear, task specific PPE. The most common reason workers give for not wearing PPE is, “I didn’t think I needed it.”

CONTROLLING EYE HAZARDS AT THE SOURCE
Following are some ways in which eye hazards may be controlled at the source:

- Use protective screens and wire mesh grids to protect from flying particles
- Install safety glass guards on machines to prevent injuries caused by flying chips or splashing liquids
- Place moveable shields around grinders, lathes and other similar machines to protect other workers
- Enclose sources of fine dusts, mists or vapours
- Control dust and fumes using general or local ventilation systems
- Isolate hazardous operations in separate areas
- For outdoor work, damp down work areas and seal dusty surfaces

SECONDARY LINE OF DEFENSE
Protective eyewear will have the Z87 or Z94.3 marking on the arm or frame of the glasses, including prescription safety glasses. Additionally, they require side shields to protect from potential side impact. Look for the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) mark, ensuring that the protective eyewear meets, or exceeds, existing CSA safety standards

TASK SPECIFIC PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR
It is important to understand and use the proper protective eyewear for the job, process or procedure. For example, safety goggles that protect from dust may not protect from chemical splashes or radiation. Sealed goggles would be a better choice for chemical hazards. Other considerations:

- Make sure that the protective eyewear fits properly - it should be snug but not uncomfortable
- Choose protective eyewear with polycarbonate lenses, as polycarbonate is impact and scratch resistant and they are better at transmitting light, providing clear vision, and they are the thinnest, lightest lenses available
- Never tamper with protective eyewear and always keep a spare pair on hand
- Inspect before each use

LEGISLATION
87 (1) – Where an employer or contactor is required by these regulations or any other regulations made pursuant to the Act to provide personal protective equipment, the employer or contactor shall:
Supply approved personal protective equipment (PPE) to the workers at no cost to the workers
Ensure that the personal protective equipment is used by the workers
Ensure that the PPE is at the worksite before work begins
Ensure that the PPE is stored in a clean secure location that is easily accessible to workers
Ensure that each worker is aware of the location of the PPE and trained in its use
Inform the workers of the reason why the PPE is required to be used and the limitations of its protection
When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite, we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names, and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose: to inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up-to-date on the information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance, and any follow-up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping, but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.

One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager’s responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks. Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.

For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf

ABOUT THE SASKATCHEWAN CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ASSOCIATION

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded, membership-based, non-profit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees in the construction industry throughout the province to reduce the human and financial losses associated with injuries. Registered March 20, 1995, the SCSA is, and has been since inception, committed to injury prevention. Serving almost 10,000 member companies with business offices in both Regina and Saskatoon, the major business units of the association are Advisory Services, Business Development, Corporate Services, Program Services and Training. The mission of the SCSA is constructing safety leadership in Saskatchewan and the vision is to create the safest construction environment in Canada.