



Prevention of Eye Injuries / Loss of Vision for Firefighters



Public Employee Alert #32 Safety & Health Bulletin **ATTENTION: All Public Employers** June 2020

This Safety Alert is being sent in response to the potential for injuries to occur when firefighters' eyes are not fully protected against impact from foreign objects while on the fireground or performing other emergency services related activities.

PLEASE ENSURE THAT THIS INFORMATION IS SHARED WITH ALL APPROPRIATE PERSONNEL

- 29 CFR 1910.133(a)(1) requires that the eyes of employees be protected against injury by the employer providing appropriate eye protection when exposed to flying particles.
- In interpreting the word appropriate as it applies to the fire service, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) provides guidance.
- Stand-alone eye protection as provided solely by a structural firefighting helmet's externally mounted faceshield / visor is not considered to be PRIMARY EYE PROTECTION as defined by the NFPA. (NFPA 1500-2018, clause 7.18.1.3)
- Even if the fire helmet's external faceshield / visor is marked with "Z87+" and compliant with NFPA 1971, PRIMARY EYE PROTECTION such as Z87+ rated safety glasses (spectacles) or goggles are required when the firefighter is exposed to the potential of flying debris. (NFPA 1500-2018, Annex, A.7.18.1.1)
- Flip-down brim-mounted eye protection, such as certain manufacturer provided "Bourke" eye shields, generally do not provide the protection required by 29 CFR 1910.133 as interpreted through application of NFPA 1500, but must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Manufacturer supplied retractable visors that are stowed inside a fire helmet may provide the protection required by 29 CFR 1910.133 as interpreted through application of NFPA 1500, but must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- SCBA full-facepieces are considered to be PRIMARY EYE PROTECTION by NFPA 1500-2018 and meet the requirements of 29 CFR 1910.133

NJ Public Employers must report all work-related fatalities to PEOSH within eight (8) hours as well as all work-related in-patient hospitalizations, amputations, and losses of an eye to PEOSH within twenty-four (24) hours.

In the event that the individual responsible for reporting is not sure whether the incident is work-related or not, a report is to be made.

The oral report shall be made directly to (800) 624-1644.

Any employer who willfully or repeatedly violates the requirements of the Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Act shall be assessed a civil administrative penalty of up to \$70,000 for each violation pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:6A-41(d).

For additional information about the Public Employees Occupational Safety & Health Act contact:

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(800) 624-1644
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