

Farm Safety Series

Eye Protection for Agricultural Field Workers

According to the National Institute of Safety and Health's 1993 compilation of farm injuries, the most prevalent injury that nursery workers in the Southeast incur is to the victims' eyes. Many of these injuries are thought to occur from plant material coming in contact with workers unprotected eyes. These injuries are preventable simply by requiring field workers to wear appropriate eye protection at all times when handling plant material.

There are two types of eye protection:

1. Vented and unvented goggles
2. Safety glasses with side-access protection

The unvented goggles are necessary for chemical protection, such as when mixing and working with pesticides, spray painting, or using harsh cleaning compounds. The vented goggles are more comfortable when worn on a regular basis, and many

models can be worn over prescription glasses that the worker may need. Neither prescription glasses nor sunglasses should be substituted for appropriate eye protection because the lenses seldom serve as adequate protection from a frontal impact and never from an angle impact. The most comfortable eye protection is safety glasses but side protection must be a part of the device to prevent objects from entering the eye from an angle approach.

Eyes must be protected in extremely dusty environments as well, and the unvented goggles are the most effective protection that can be provided for that situation.

When sun protection is needed for the eyes, sunglasses should be worn under the appropriate goggles or safety glasses.

Learning Points in Eye Protection

1. Wear specially designed eye protection against pesticides and other chemicals, dust, and plant material that can contact your eyes.
2. Use the appropriate eye protection device for a particular situation:
 - Chemicals and dust—nonvented goggles
 - Shop work and contact with plant material—vented goggles or safety glasses with side protection structures

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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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