



Selecting Safe Footwear

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is crucial when it comes to preventing injuries and ensuring your health and safety on the job site. One often overlooked and important type of PPE is safety footwear, which is designed to protect your feet from common job site hazards.

Depending on the job activity and equipment you use, the following exposures could lead to serious foot injuries:

- Heavy objects, which could fall or roll onto your feet, crushing them
- Sharp objects, which could puncture your feet
- Corrosive materials
- Electrical hazards
- Hot or slippery surfaces

When these risks are present in the workplace, employees must wear protective footwear to ensure safety and reduce injury risks. While you may think that a pair of boots is all you need to avoid injury, there are a number of different hazards that a regular work boot may not protect against. This Safety Matters examines various types of safety boots common in construction.

Types of Safety Boots

There are several factors that determine what type of footwear is appropriate for you, including the potential hazards you're exposed to, the machinery you use and the requirements of your position. What's more, there are different types of safety boots, each designed to mitigate specific workplace hazards. The following are the most common kinds of protective footwear:

- **Steel-toe, reinforced safety-toe or reinforced toecap boots**—These types of boots are designed to protect against crushing injuries caused by falling or dropped objects. For extra protection, metatarsal guards can be used, which help to safeguard the bones between your toes and ankle.
- **Puncture-resistant boots**—These boots are typically reinforced with metal and are designed to prevent injury should you step on a nail, screw or other sharp object.
- **Metal-free footwear**—These types of boots are nonconductive and protect against electrocution risks. In general, these types of boots can provide protection for up to 600 volts of electricity in dry environments. It should be noted that moisture and wear on boots can impact the effectiveness of these kinds of safety protection around electricity, follow all applicable safe work procedures and wear metal-free footwear alongside other nonconductive PPE.
- **Nonslip soles** Slip-resistant boots are equipped with a specialized sole that can reduce slip, trip and fall risks. These boots are especially common in shop environments where cords, materials and other items increase trip hazards.
- **Insulated footwear**—These boots are designed to protect feet against extreme temperatures. It should be noted that there are specific boots for both hot and cold environments. Furthermore, risks related to chemical burns require specially treated boots.

Regardless of the type of safety boots you use, it's important to ensure they fit properly and are well maintained. Safety boots should be inspected before each use for signs of wear. If a boot is cracked or shows other signs of damage, replace it immediately.

For any questions regarding safety boots, speak with your supervisor.

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