SAFETY SHOE SELECTION

Basic foot protection is a sturdy shoe or boot made of leather, rubber, or a synthetic. It has an impact-resistant toe—usually steel—and nonskid soles with rubber or synthetic treads to prevent slips and falls.

The American National Standard for safety-toe footwear referred to in the OSHA standard deals with the strength of the toe box. The top classification, 75, will withstand the impact of 75 pounds per square inch falling on your foot. As further protection in jobs where heavy objects could land on your feet, you might also wear footguards made of aluminum alloy, fiberglass, or galvanized steel over your shoes.

Other possible protections you may need in your shoes or boots are:

- Metal insoles or reinforced soles to protect against puncture
- Nonconducting soles and no nails in the shoes themselves if you work with electricity
- Rubber boots or shoes or leather shoes with wooden soles if you work in wet conditions
- Heat-resistant soles if you work in areas where the floor gets hot
- Easy-to-remove gaiters if you could get splashed by hot metal or by welding sparks
- Impermeable rubber or neoprene boots to wear over or instead of work boots if you work with corrosives or hazardous chemicals.

Feet First

National Foot Health Awareness Month

The National Safety Council reported that in a recent year, there were 130,000 disabling foot injuries, plus another 40,000 toe injuries on the job. Most of those could have been prevented by wearing the proper shoes.

Because of these frequent injuries, OSHA's foot protection standard (29 CFR 1910.136) states, “Each affected employee shall wear protective footwear when working in areas where there is a danger of foot injuries due to falling or rolling objects, or objects piercing the sole, and where such employee's feet are exposed to electrical hazards.”

The main hazards to your feet on the job are:

- Having heavy objects fall on them
- Having heavy objects roll on them
- Stubbing or banging your toes on something heavy

Another on-the-job hazard that doesn't usually cause foot injuries, but is a result of not wearing the right shoes, is slipping. There is also the possibility of burns or chemical contact if safety shoes don't fit correctly or aren't made of the right material to protect against the hazards of a particular job.

The type of footwear required by the standard—and common sense—obviously depends on the kinds of hazards you encounter on the job. You need sturdy shoes no matter what you do. But you also have to think about the specific hazards you face to decide what to wear on your feet.

You need protective shoes of some sort if there could be a risk of having something fall on your feet, roll over them, or bump them because you:

- Work with or around heavy equipment, or
- Do material handling.

You also need protection for your feet if you work:

- On wet surfaces
- With electricity
- Where nails or other sharp objects could puncture your shoes

Working with corrosives or hazardous substances requires foot protection, too, because those substances could penetrate normal shoes. And we all need protection from slipping and falling. See the sidebar for shoe selection tips.
**Driving Distraction**

**How cell phones distract**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that it receives more complaints and requests for information about cell phone use than any other driving issue. Part of the reason is that cell phone users are readily visible to other drivers, at least in the handheld mode. In fact, it’s probably safe to say that almost every driver has either had a near-crash experience with a cell phone user or has witnessed risky behavior of some sort. The concerns about the safety of such driving are growing.

Human factor experts tell us that there are four kinds of driving distractions:

1. **Visual.** Looking away from the roadway would be an example of this.
2. **Biomechanical.** An example is manipulating a control, such as dialing a phone or adjusting a radio, and can often be associated with a visual distraction.
3. **Auditory,** such as being startled by a ringing phone.
4. **Cognitive.** An example would be the common experience of traveling from point A to point B and suddenly realizing that we aren’t sure how we got there or what happened in between. Being “lost in thought” or being in focused conversation with someone causes us to withdraw from situational awareness.

Researchers are obtaining evidence that shifting from handheld to hands-free phone use while driving does not result in eliminating all cell phone distractions. It addresses the visual and mechanical distractions but does not address auditory and cognitive issues.

**Flat-Footed!**

**How much do you know about foot safety?**

1. Job-related foot hazards include having heavy objects fall or roll on feet and stubbing or banging toes. **True**
2. OSHA requires protective footwear in areas where foot injuries are possible. **True**
3. You don’t need foot protection if you work on hot floors. **False**
4. Protective footwear’s impact-resistant toes are usually steel. **True**
5. To prevent slips and falls, shoes should have:
   - a. Steel toes
   - b. Nonskid soles
   - c. Punctures
   - d. Slips and falls
   - e. Electricity
   **True**
6. Metal insoles or reinforced soles help protect feet from:
   - a. Punctures
   - b. Slips and falls
   - c. Steel
   - d. Rubber or neoprene
   **True**
7. Wear footguards over shoes in areas where heavy objects may fall on feet. **True**
8. Sandals are acceptable work shoes. **False**
9. For work with corrosives, the best footwear is impermeable boots made of:
   - a. Leather or plastic
   - b. Steel
   - c. Rubber or neoprene
   **True**
10. Even if a job doesn’t require protective footwear, you should wear shoes with low heels and nonskid soles. **True**

**Answers**

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. False

CAUTION:

- **NEST-FOOTED.**

Flat-Footed!

DON'T STRESS ABOUT IT!

Does stress sometimes seem like an unavoidable fact of life? It doesn’t have to be! In fact, make the wise decision now—during Stress Awareness Month—to learn how to manage stress well so that you can avoid the serious health problems that long-term stress can cause.

Try these stress-reducing techniques:

- Get a more restful sleep by adjusting room sound, light, and temperature.
- Take warm baths.
- Cut down on caffeine, alcohol, and smoking.
- Exercise, either solo, at a gym, or with a buddy.
- Socialize more—go to the movies with family or friends, have a spring picnic, or throw a party and invite your friends.
- Use deep breathing exercises or get a massage.
- Set aside time for yourself every day.
- Meditate.

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF

Did you know that?

- In one recent year, high blood pressure was the primary or contributing cause in more than 315,000 deaths in the United States.
- Estimates are that high blood pressure and its related health problems will cost the U.S. economy almost $75 billion this year.
- More than one-quarter of U.S. adults have prehypertension.