Seeing Beyond Safety Glasses

A floorhand was cleaning the derrick with rig wash. Some soapy water - chemicals - ran down his forehead into his left eye. Another worker was mixing chemicals. The wind was blowing hard and some of the mixture blew into his eye. A roustabout was hosing off shaker screens when some mud, containing chemicals, splashed into his eye.

All of these workers were wearing safety glasses. But they weren't wearing the proper personal protective equipment (PPE).

Safety glasses might not provide enough protection when your work involves chemicals, a lot of particulate matter or dust, or a wash-down situation.

In fact, according to a survey by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 40 percent of workers who sustained eye injuries were wearing some form of eye protection when the incident occurred. Many of these workers were probably wearing protective eyeglasses with no side shields, but some injuries occurred while employees were wearing full-cup or flat-fold side shields.

Most eye injury incidents result from flying or falling objects or sparks striking the eye, and usually involve objects smaller than a pin head. Contact with chemicals causes about one in five eye injuries on the job. Others are caused by objects swinging from a fixed or attached position, such as tree limbs, ropes, chains or tools pulled into the eye while the worker was using them.

Often, avoiding such incidents means matching PPE to the potential problem. Take these steps to protect your eyes:

• Analyze activities that may require additional eye protection and make sure you understand that safety glasses alone are not always adequate.

• Wear goggles if there is exposure to high wind conditions, particulates (chipping/scraping operations), chemicals (including rig wash, detergent, mixing or painting), air discharge and water under pressure (water hoses or wash-down guns).

• Safety goggles form a protective seal around the eyes. To make sure this seal is adequate, have the goggle frames properly fitted to your face.

• A combination of face shields and goggles provides the best protection.

• Keep all eye protection clean and in good condition. Scratched and dirty devices reduce vision, cause glare and may contribute to accidents.

What would you do if you lost your eyesight? What if, when you left for work this morning, it was the last time you would see your family? Think about it. Use eye protection that is right for your job.
Eyesight is precious and can't be replaced.

Use eye protection that is right for your job.