

SAFETY MEMO

December 6th, 2021 – Foot Comfort



Did you know?

Introduction

Did you know that foot comfort is an important predictor for a near miss or severe injury in the workplace? Foot injuries account for a high number of workplace accidents – 22,755 foot-related injuries in 2019¹ – because of the increase in discomfort, pain, and fatigue. A worker that is tired, suffering, and in pain is less alert and less likely to act in a safe manner.

Common Causes of Foot Problems

Some foot problems are so common that they can occur in any situation: at home, at work, or in the pursuit of leisure.

- Long periods of standing
- Poorly fitting footwear such as high heels, pointed shoes, lack of arch support, too loose or too tight footwear
- Hot and humid environments
- Strenuous work
- Footwear with synthetic (non-porous) material

Working position, the type of flooring used, and the type of footwear worn all contribute to foot problems. Periods of long standing on hard, unyielding floors are the least comfortable positions and can greatly increase foot discomfort.

Industry	Risk of Incident/Accident
Food Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Feet pulled into sharp machines▪ Sharp-edged objects on ground▪ Slippery surfaces
Concrete and Cement Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Heavy objects falling on feet▪ Foot struck or crushed by moving vehicle▪ Spraining the foot on irregular ground▪ Irritations which can lead to burns

How Can Foot Injuries be Prevented?

There is no workplace where workers are immune to foot injuries, however the hazards differ according to the workplace and the tasks involved. Conducting a hazard assessment and identify the risks involved prior to commencing work is the first step towards preventing foot injuries, followed by choosing and wearing the appropriate type of footwear. It is important to note that all jurisdictions in Canada require workers to wear footwear adequate to protect against workplace hazards.

When choosing footwear, keep in mind these pointers:

- A steel toe cap should cover the whole length of the toes from tips to beyond the natural bend of the foot
- Soles come in a variety of thickness and materials; choose the one according to the hazards and types of flooring at the workplace
- A steel midsole (protection against sharp objects and punctures) should be flexible to allow the foot to bend
- Footwear that includes ankle reinforcements to minimize rolling and sprains.

Personal Protective Equipment

Safety footwear should provide comfort without compromising protective value. Employees subjected to foot hazards must wear protective footwear appropriate to job site requirements that conform with CSA Standard CAN/CSA-Z195-14 (R2019) (Canada), ASTM 2413-18 or ASTM 2413-11 (USA), EN ISO 20345:2011 (Europe).

When choosing footwear, follow these simple steps:

- Have both feet measured
- Buy shoes that fit the bigger foot
- Consider using shock-absorbing insoles
- The heel should be no more than 60 mm (2.5 inches)



¹ Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada. National Work Injury, Disease and Fatalities Statistics. (2017-2019). <https://awcbc.org/en/statistics/#nwisp>

