

RISK SERVICES

EMPLOYEE SAFETY UPDATE

FOOT PROTECTION: CHOOSING THE RIGHT TYPE



Deciding on the right kind of foot protection largely depends on the types of hazards you're exposed to. Some of the most common types of foot hazards and the best type of protective footwear to guard against these hazards include:

Falling objects: To protect against falling objects that could injure you if they land on your feet, choose shoes with steel toes or toe caps made out of hard composite plastic. If your exposure to falling object hazards is only occasional, you can use a strap-on toe guard instead of wearing shoes with built-in toe protection. You can also protect your entire foot — not just your toes — from falling and rolling objects if you select shoes with metatarsal protection or use strap-on metatarsal guards made of aluminum or high-density plastic.

Rolling objects: If you're exposed to heavy, rolling objects that could crush your feet, select footwear with good ankle protection. This is important when you're working with carts, pallet jacks, dollies or any other items on wheels that could bang into your ankle or catch your heel and cause an injury. Some footwear will have a steel shank in the heel to protect the heel and Achilles tendon from rolling objects while others will have steel shanks going up the sides of the ankles to prevent the ankles from being twisted or damaged by rolling objects. As stated above, you can also protect your entire foot from rolling objects if you select shoes with metatarsal protection or use strap-on metatarsal guards made of aluminum or high-density plastic.

Sharp objects: To prevent puncture wounds from sharp objects, such as metal chips, nails or screws, choose puncture-resistant shoes. Puncture-resistant shoes have soles that are made of hard, dense materials. Some have steel

shanks in the soles that prevent sharp objects from piercing through to the foot.

Electrical hazards: If your job requires you to work around live electrical components and conductors, wear nonconductive shoes. Nonconductive footwear is designed to reduce the potential for electric shock. The soles can typically be exposed to up to 600 volts in dry conditions while still protecting you from hazardous electrical energy.

Chemical hazards: If you work around liquid chemicals, acids or caustic liquids that could get on your feet, you should wear chemical-resistant boots. These boots can be made of rubber, polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or neoprene or vinyl. The best choice of material for chemical-resistant boots depends on the specific chemicals you work with. Check the safety data sheet (SDS) to find out what materials will work best for you.

Slippery surfaces: If your workplace has slippery surfaces, wear slip-resistant shoes. These have soft, rubber soles that grip the surface of the floor and have treads with channels that carry water, oil, chemicals or other materials out from under the shoe. Even if you're wearing slip-resistant shoes, it's important to walk carefully in slippery areas to avoid falling. In wet or muddy conditions, wear waterproof boots to keep your feet dry. Basic rain boots made of PVC or rubber will work in these situations if you don't require additional protection from other hazards.

Cold conditions: In cold conditions, you need footwear with insulated liners to keep your feet warm. If your feet could be exposed to moist and cold environments, select footwear that's also waterproof.



Personal fall protection system: Inspecting lanyards

Before you use a lanyard, inspect it for mildew, wear, damage and other deterioration. A thorough inspection of a safe lanyard may include:

- Inspect snaps closely for hook-and-eye distortions, cracks, corrosion or pitted surfaces. The latch, or keeper, should fit into the nose without binding and should not be distorted or obstructed. The keeper spring should produce enough force to firmly close the keeper, and the keeper lock must prevent the keeper from opening when it closes.
- The protective plastic sleeve, called the thimble, must fit firmly in the eye of the splice, and the splice must not have loose or cut strands. The edges of the thimble must not have any sharp edges, distortions or cracks.
- For wire rope lanyards, look for cuts, frayed areas and unusual wearing patterns on the wire.
- For web lanyards, bend the webbing over a piece of pipe and look at each side. Check for swelling, discoloration, cracks and charring, and make sure there are no breaks in stitching. Inspect shock-absorbing lanyards in the same way; also check for the warning flag or signs of involvement in a fall.
- For rope lanyards, look for any fuzzy, worn, broken or cut fibers. The rope diameter should be uniform throughout and weakened areas will appear as noticeable changes in diameter.
- Examine shock-absorber packs for burn holes and tears. Check the stitching for loose strands, rips and deterioration.

If you find any damage, remove the lanyard from service immediately and tag or mark it as unusable. If any part of the personal fall protection system is involved in a fall incident, remove it from service immediately.

WORKPLACE STRESS

Stress can be harmful to our health and increase the severity and frequency of mental health concerns. Mental health concerns may include clinical mental illness and substance use disorders as well as other negative emotions — including stress, grief, sadness and anxiety. These feelings may be temporary and not part of a diagnosable condition.

While there are many things in life that induce stress, work can be one of the key factors.

However, according to [the Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (OSHA), workplaces can also be

one of the places employees can turn to for resources, solutions and activities designed to improve our mental health and well-being.

Workplace stress and poor mental health can negatively affect workers’:

- Job performance
- Productivity
- Work engagement and communication
- Physical capability and daily functioning

To bring awareness to the importance of mental health, we recognize May as Mental Health Awareness Month. Check in with yourself and others; leverage your mental health resources you are in need of help.

Landscaping safety: Using lawn mowers

To prevent lawn mower incidents and injuries, follow these do’s and don’ts:

- **Do** review the manufacturer’s instructions before using a mower.
- **Do** inspect the mower before each use to make sure all protective devices are in place and that all parts are in good condition.
- **Do** use rollover protective structures (ROPS) and seat belts if your mower is equipped with them.
- **Do** inspect the area you’re mowing, and clear away objects that could be caught in the mower’s blades.
- **Do** wear all necessary personal protective equipment (PPE). At a minimum, you’ll need eye protection and hearing protection.
- **Do** make sure your shoes are sturdy and have a closed toe.
- **Do** drive the mower slowly, and avoid sudden starts, stops and turns.
- **Do** use caution when mowing in areas with drop-offs, bodies of water and wet surfaces.
- **Do** watch out for pedestrians and other workers in the area.
- **Do** use a tool or spray it with a hose to unclog or clean under a mower deck.
- **Don’t** run the mower when the grass is wet.
- **Don’t** start the mower unless you’re in the driver’s seat.
- **Don’t** run the mower over gravel or rocks.
- **Don’t** allow any passengers to ride with you on the mower.
- **Don’t** operate a mower on steep slopes.
- **Don’t** fill a gasoline-powered mower indoors, and don’t add gasoline while the engine is hot or running.
- **Don’t** leave a mower unattended while it’s running; turn it off and take the key with you.



Chemical spotlight

Malathion

Malathion is a yellow or deep-brown liquid with a skunk-like odor. It's an organophosphate insecticide and available as wettable powders, liquid concentrates, dusts and aerosols. Malathion isn't compatible with metals.

Store malathion in tightly closed containers in a cool, well-ventilated, uninhabited area away from food, feedstuffs, plastics and rubber. Malathion must be stored to avoid contact with oxidizing agents. Sources of ignition are prohibited where the chemical is used, handled or stored.

If malathion is spilled or leaked, avoid breathing vapors, mist or gas and ensure adequate ventilation. Remove all sources of ignition and evacuate personnel to safe areas. Use personal protective equipment (PPE), including goggles or safety glasses,

gloves, flame-retardant protective clothing and respiratory protection.

Prevent further leakage or spillage, if safe to do so, and don't let the product enter drains, sewers, underground or confined spaces, groundwater, waterways, or discharge into the environment. Absorb liquids in dry sand, earth or a similar material and deposit in sealed containers. Ventilate and wash the area after cleanup is complete.

It may be necessary to contain and dispose of malathion as a hazardous waste. Contact the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and local environmental regulatory agency for specific recommendations.