

Contact Lens Use in Industry



According to the Contact Lens Council, there are 34 million contact lens wearers in the U.S. Between 90 and 97% of the 34 million individuals are adults. Many of these individuals are employed in industry.

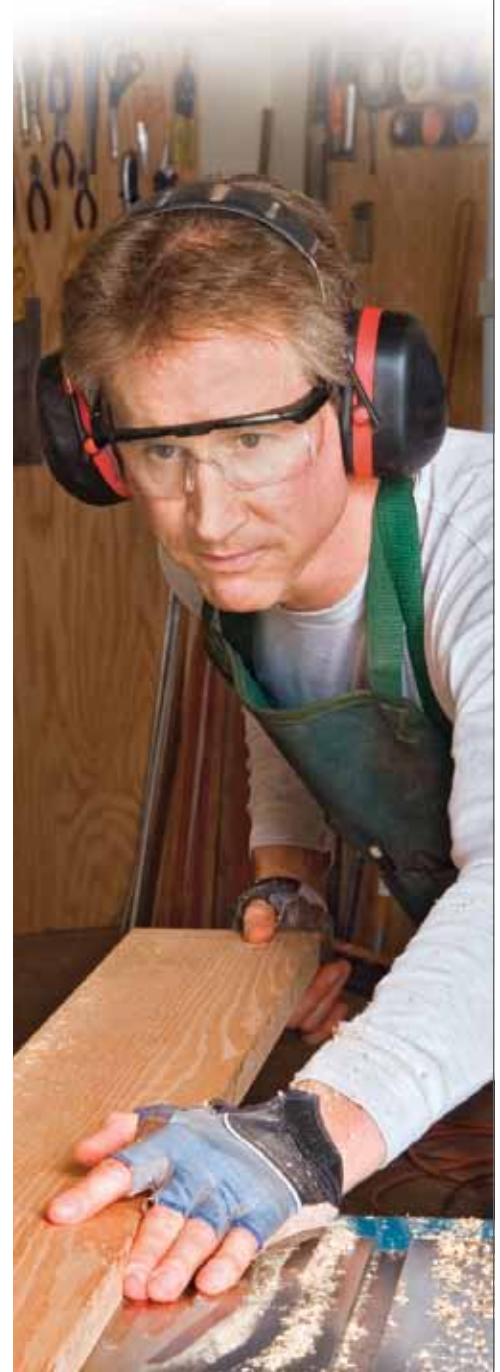
Contact lenses sometimes provide a superior means of visual rehabilitation for employees who have had a cataract removed from one or both eyes, who are highly nearsighted, or who have irregular astigmatism from corneal scars or keratoconus. Except for cases in which there are significant risks of ocular injury, individuals may be allowed to wear contact lenses in the workplace.

Generally speaking, contact lens wearers who have had long-term success with contacts can judge for themselves whether or not they will be able to wear contact lenses in their occupational environment. However, contact lens wearers must conform to the regulations and directions of management regarding contact lens use. When the work environment involves exposure to chemicals, vapors, splashes, radiant or intense heat, molten metals or air born particles, contact lens use should be restricted accordingly. Contact lens use considerations should be made on a case by case basis in conjunction with the guidelines of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Recommendations

Prevent Blindness America makes the following recommendations to management that directs contact lens use and the employees who wear them:

1. Occupational safety eyewear meeting or exceeding ANSI Z-87.1 (the American National Standard Practice for Occupational and Educational Eye and Face Protection) should be worn at all times by individuals in designated areas.



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Contact Lens Use in Industry—Continued

2. Employees and visitors should be advised of defined areas where contacts are allowed.
3. At workstations where contacts are allowed, the type of eye protection required should be detailed and specific.
4. A specific written management policy on contact lens use should be developed, with employee input and involvement.
5. Restrictions on contact lens wear should not apply to office or secretarial workers.
6. A directory should be developed that lists all employees who wear contacts. This list should be maintained in the plant medical facility for easy access by trained first aid personnel. Foremen or supervisors should be informed of employees who wear contact lenses.
7. Medical and first aid personnel should be trained in the proper procedures and equipment for removing both hard and soft contacts from conscious and unconscious workers.
8. Employees should be required to keep a spare pair of contacts and/or a pair of up-to-date prescription safety spectacles (meeting the Z-87.1 standard) in their possession. This will allow employees to continue performing their job functions, should they damage or lose a lens while working.
9. Employees who wear contact lenses should be instructed to remove contacts right away if redness of the eye, blurring of vision or pain in the eye associated with contact lens use occurs.

