

EYE PROTECTION - EMS

What Is the Goal?

Prevention of viruses, infections, and diseases through eye exposures during emergency medical services (EMS) calls. Do you wear eye protection on every EMS call? You wear gloves to protect your hands, so why not EMS safety glasses to protect your eyes? Managing body substances from all patients is essential in preventing transmission of potentially infectious agents. Without proper eye protection, you are putting yourself at risk.

How Do I Start?

Right here, right now! Read the following safety bulletin to become familiar with occupational risks, prevention techniques, and employer responsibilities. Review your department standard operating procedure (SOP) on personal protective equipment (PPE) and infectious disease control. Talk to your crew, supervisor, and department Medical or Training Officer. Make appropriate recommendations if necessary.



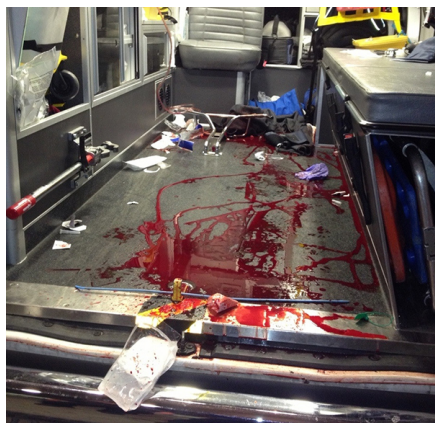
Why Eye Protection is Important

Scene safety and body substance isolation (BSI) are two of the most critical parts of EMS. BSI consists of adequate PPE to protect EMS providers from patients' blood and bodily fluids. EMS providers must treat all patients as potentially infectious and wear proper PPE whenever there's a potential for contact with blood or bodily fluids. At a minimum, BSI should consist of disposable gloves and appropriate eye protection.

Eye protection is an essential piece of PPE for Firefighters performing EMS. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends eye protection where workers may be at risk of acquiring infectious diseases via ocular exposure. Infectious diseases can be transmitted through the mucous membranes of the eye. Firefighters can contract viruses that can cause systemic infections, including bloodborne viruses (e.g. hepatitis B and C viruses, human immunodeficiency virus), herpes viruses, and rhinoviruses. These agents are introduced to the eye via blood splashes, respiratory droplets generated during coughing or suctioning, or from touching the eyes with contaminated fingers or other objects.

Additional Resources & Info

- Washington State Council of Firefighters Health & Safety Committee health@wscff.org
- WAC 296-305-02501: Emergency Medical Protection
- General Duty Clause of the OSH Act
- 1910.133 - Eye and Face Protection
- Personal Injury Illness Exposure Reporting System (PIIERS) www.piiers.org



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Eye Injury Facts

- Nearly 2,000 eye injuries occur every day in the United States.
- Firefighters are at risk of eye contamination or injury from blood and other body fluids, fine and large particulates, splashes from liquid medications and other chemicals, and other forms of blunt or penetrating trauma.

WAC 296-305-02501: Emergency Medical Protection

- Firefighters who perform emergency medical care or otherwise may be exposed to blood or other body fluids shall be provided with emergency medical face protection devices, and emergency medical garments that meet the applicable requirements of the 1999 edition of NFPA 1999, Standard on Protective Clothing for Emergency Medical Operations.
- Firefighters shall don emergency medical gloves and eye protection prior to initiating any emergency patient care.

Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) Employer Requirements

- The OSHA general duty clause, Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, requires that each employer furnish to each of its employees a workplace that is free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm.
- The employer shall ensure that each affected employee uses appropriate eye or face protection when exposed to eye or face hazards, 1910.133.