Working Safely is no Mean Feet



They carry you through heat or cold, wet and slippery conditions. Your feet are also at risk from falling construction materials and equipment. No wonder wearing approved steel-toed boots can be required on the job. In construction, work-related foot injuries include punctures, crushing, sprains and cuts, and injuries from slips, trips and falls.

Some foot problems are less obvious, but still safety-related. Calluses, ingrown toenails or tired feet cause discomfort, pain and fatigue. Fatigue sets up the worker for injuries affecting muscles and joints. Also, a worker who is tired and suffering foot pain is less alert and more likely to act unsafely.

Safety footwear in a variety of styles protects from hazards such as heat, cold, electricity, chemicals and slipping. Variety ranges from heavy-duty work boots and shoes to dress, athletic and hiking-type designs. New technology and materials make products substantially lighter.

Old-style work boots took time to break in. Today, they’re often comfortable right out of the box. Experts even warn against buying shoes that aren’t immediately comfortable. Get a proper fit. Leather will breathe, bend and stretch over time, forming itself to your foot, but the toe box won’t budge.

While fitting, use the type of sock you would normally wear on the job. Feet swell through the day, so plan to try footwear on during the afternoon.

Extreme hot and cold weather conditions affect the boot’s performance. Choose appropriate footwear for these environments.

Get both feet measured whenever you buy shoes. Many people have one foot longer than the other, and should fit the shoe to the larger one.

Protective footwear should always be laced up fully, with boots fitting snugly around the heel and ankle. Although high-cut boots might not be stylish, they support against ankle injury.

Heels contribute to fatigue, so there should either be no heel or a low, wide-based heel. When a job requires walking or standing on hard surfaces, consider using shock-absorbing insoles.

Make sure your toes are a half-inch or 12.5 mm from the front. Even if materials have some “give”, don’t expect footwear to stretch.

You should own at least two pairs of protective footwear. Breaking-in can cause blisters that can be avoided by rotating old and new boots.

Care of your safety footwear should include:

- Water-resistant coating
- Regular inspection for damage
- Repair or replacement if defective

Construction work has its share of dangers to your feet. Look after your protective footwear and it will look after you.