Recent Eye Injury in a Vehicle Service Shop

While walking through your organization, you may occasionally come across an employee that is working without the proper Personal Protective Equipment, or maybe this is the norm with your employees. In either case it only takes a second for an employee’s life to change forever.

Recently, United Heartland received a claim for an employee who was performing service on a truck in the account’s service shop. The work being performed would be considered typical for this service technician, and the employee had access to all of the proper tools and equipment to complete the job.

The technician had removed a driveshaft from the truck so that he could install new U-joints. In order to perform the installation, the employee was kneeling on the ground, looking at the top of the driveshaft, and striking the U-joint caps with his hammer. During the entire process the employee was wearing his safety glasses, which is required per company policy and OSHA regulations.

During clean-up, the employee realized that he had forgotten one of the U-joint caps. He quickly got back into position and began to hammer the U-joint cap into place. However, this time the employee wasn’t wearing his safety glasses. While hammering the cap into place, a chip of metal from the cap came loose and made a direct impact into the employee’s eye. The employee suffered some vision loss to the affected eye and has ongoing treatment to repair the eye and correct his vision. The cost of this claim is currently over $115,000.

This same type of injury can occur to anyone performing work where there is a potential for flying debris, e.g. performing grinding, cutting, chipping, sawing, etc.

Do you have clear policies in place for the use of PPE? Have you assessed your workplace for hazards to determine what PPE is needed? Is training conducted for employees that are required to use the different kinds of PPE? Do supervisors enforce the proper use of PPE?

A number of items should be considered when developing a PPE policy. These include:

- Conduct a Hazard Assessment per OSHA’s PPE Standard 1910.132:
  - Employers shall assess the workplace to determine if hazards are present, or are likely to be present, which necessitate the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
  - If such hazards are present, or likely to be present, the employer shall: select, and have each affected employee use the types of PPE that will protect the affected employee from the hazards identified in the hazard assessment.
Develop Responsibilities for the Following:
  o Management/Supervisors
  o Employees
  o Contractors
  o Visitors

Training
  o Each employee required to wear PPE must receive training in the proper use and care of their PPE. It is expected that either the program coordinator or designated department representative will provide this training. This training must include the following:
    ▪ When PPE is to be worn.
    ▪ What PPE is necessary.
    ▪ How to properly put on, take off, adjust and wear PPE.
    ▪ The limitations of PPE.
    ▪ The proper care, maintenance, useful life and disposal of PPE.

  o The employee must demonstrate an understanding of the training and ability to use PPE properly before being allowed to perform work requiring the use of PPE.

For additional information, resources and assistance on implementing your own PPE program, please contact your United Heartland Loss Control Representative.