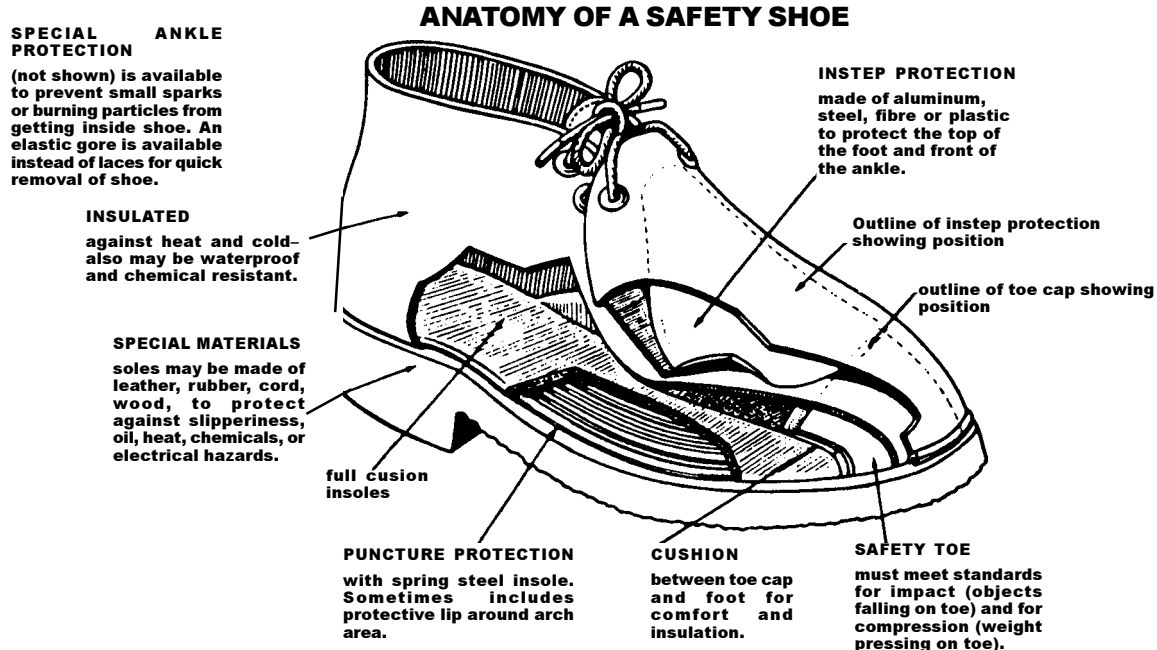


LOSS CONTROL DATA GUIDE

Safety Shoes – Fact and Fallacy



Over 100,000 foot and toe injuries occur in the workplace each year. In addition to the pain and disability suffered by the injured worker, these injuries cost employers over \$1,000,000,000 annually in wage replacement and medical benefits, and lost productivity.

Proper foot protection, when worn, can significantly reduce the frequency and severity of foot and toe injuries. Making certain that appropriate foot protection is used, however, can be a difficult assignment for supervisors, because of the numerous misconceptions surrounding safety shoes. The most common fallacies, and the corresponding facts regarding safety shoes, are as follows:

They're uncomfortable

If toes are cramped in shoes that are too small, they will hurt. For feet that tend to spread, a larger size or width in safety shoes than in street shoes may be

necessary. When choosing foot protection, a qualified individual should fit them. Both shoes should be tried on and walked around in to be certain they are comfortable.

They're too stiff

Unless a safety shoe has been fitted improperly, this should not be a problem. While it is true that a safety shoe with a steel insert for sole puncture protection may be a little less flexible than a street shoe, the extra protection is well worth the minimal loss in flexibility.

They're too heavy

A steel toe cap weights approximately 42.5 grams, about as much as a wristwatch or a pair of rimless eyeglasses. Steel toe safety shoes are definitely not much heavier than street shoes.

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They are too hot or too cold

Most modern safety footwear has a layer of felt or some other material to keep toes warm in winter and cool in summer. Extra protection is available for temperature extremes. Wearing appropriate socks is also important, in order to maintain a comfortable temperature.

They're not stylish

Today's safety shoes come in almost every imaginable style – from dressy wing tips, loafers, and pumps, to Western-style boots, jogging shoes, and hiking boots – as well as traditional work shoe styles. The salesperson can provide specific assistance in matching styles with the degree of foot protection required by the worker.

The steel cap doesn't protect all the toes

Generally, this is true. However, most toe injuries involve the first and second toes, which are protected by all safety shoe steel toe caps.

The steel cap collapses and injures the toes

No one knows how this myth got started, but a lot of workers believe it. Imagine what would happen to the toes without steel cap protection!

They are a tripping hazard

No more than any other work shoe. Safety shoes equipped with metatarsal protection do increase the likelihood of tripping, particularly when climbing ladders. However, the additional foot and toe protection provided by metatarsal safety shoes far outweighs the tripping potential.

They are not readily available

Many companies have in-plant shoe stores, while others arrange for a shoemobile to visit periodically. Regional distributors of safety footwear can also be located by contacting safety footwear manufacturers.

They cost too much

Can the worker, or the employer, afford the cost of crippling foot injury? Through quantity purchases and employer discounts/subsidies, safety footwear often costs less than street shoes.

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