



Weekly Safety Tip

March Is Eye Wellness Month



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Tips to ease eye strain

- Sit at arm's length, or 25 inches, from the computer screen.
- Every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- Adjust your room lighting and increase the contrast on your computer.
- Use artificial tears to refresh your eyes when they feel dry.

Learn more at aao.org/eyesmart

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The average office worker spends 1,700 hours per year in front of a computer screen. And that doesn't include our addiction to phones and other digital devices. All this screen time has led to an increase in complaints of [eye strain](#), [dry eye](#), headaches and [insomnia](#).

During **Workplace Eye Wellness Month in March**, the **Safety Council of Northwest Ohio** along with the **American Academy of Ophthalmology** is offering tips to desk workers everywhere whose eyes may need relief from too much screen time.

Why does computer use strain the eye? Mainly because people tend to blink less while using computers. Focusing the eyes on computer screens or other digital displays has been shown to reduce a person's blink rate by a third to a half, which tends to dry out the eyes. We also tend to view digital devices at less than ideal distances or angles.

You don't need to buy expensive computer glasses to get relief. In fact, a study concluded that [blue light filters are no more effective at reducing the symptoms of digital eye strain than a neutral filter](#).

Instead, try altering your environment with these simple tips:

- **Keep your distance:** The eyes actually have to work harder to see close up than far away. Try keeping the screen at arm's length, about 25 inches away. Position the screen so your eye gaze is slightly downward.
- **Reduce glare:** Glass screens can produce glare that can aggravate the eye. Try using a matte screen filter.
- **Adjust lighting:** If a screen is much brighter than the surrounding light, your eyes have to work harder to see. Adjust your room lighting and try increasing the contrast on your screen to reduce eye strain.
- **Give your eyes a break:** Remember to blink. Looking into the distance allows your eyes to relax.
- **Keep eyes moist:** Keep artificial tears at hand to help lubricate your eyes when they feel dry. Consider using a desktop humidifier. Office buildings have humidity-controlled environments that suck moisture out of the air. In winter, heaters on high can further dry your eyes.
- **Stop using devices before bed:** There is evidence that blue light may affect the body's circadian rhythm, our natural wake and sleep cycle. During the day, blue light wakes us up and stimulates us. So, too much blue light exposure late at night from your phone or other devices may make it harder to get to sleep. Limit screen time 1

Eyestrain can be frustrating. But it usually isn't serious and goes away once you rest your eyes or take other steps to reduce your eye discomfort. If these tips don't work for you, you may have an underlying eye problem, such as eye muscle imbalance or uncorrected vision, which can cause or worsen computer eyestrain. Those experiencing consistently dry red eyes or eye pain should visit an ophthalmologist, a physician specializing in medical and surgical eye care.

Weekly Safety Share



**Does The Term RISK Really
Work**

For this **Safety Share**, ask your audience the following two questions and listen very carefully to their answers, so you can better understand why they see things the way they do, and ultimately so you can talk with them about the hazards and controls necessary to work safely, in terms that make sense to them.

1. When confronted with a "harmful" situation that involves a clear & present "danger," what term best describes your personal sense of uneasiness (that gets your full attention) in such a "risky" instance?
2. When talking about what could happen on the job you are about to do, which term best gets your attention when reviewing the hazards in the work you are about to do?



RISK... I have to confess that, personally, I am sick & tired of seeing and hearing that word used ad nauseam! I do not believe that the term or word resonates well with the average worker as effectively as **HARM** (or **Danger**), because "harm" feels more personal, while "risk" seems to be more of a mathematical formula and thereby abstract.

While writing operating procedures and performing test runs of plant systems as the construction of the Davis-Besse Nuclear Station was being completed back in the 1970's, I was involved in never-ending **risk assessments**, but that involved a deservedly unique focus on something called "defense-in-depth" --- which served us well in the accident at Three Mile Island compared to what the Soviets had at Chernobyl that resulted in an actual environmental disaster due to massive amounts of radioactive materials being released uncontrollably into the environment, world-wide.

What I keep coming back to -- from instructing numerous sessions on **risk** and **critical steps** in utility settings throughout several decades -- is that the overuse of the term **RISK** just doesn't seem to 'stick' or resonate with the average worker. I could tell then that people really don't think of things in the way safety folks think they do, and worse yet - are convinced they should.

We need to keep in mind that what works best is to talk to people in terms that they understand, adjusting to your audience, not them adjusting to you. More droning on in 'safety-geek speak' on **RISK** may make us safety folks feel good with our superior insights, but does that actually help the people we are trying to help? Did they get it!

Consequently (and I do mean that from the standpoint of impactfully) what is your preference and experience with the value of blathering to people that they need to be better at Risk Assessment?

I know many safety folks are also overly enamored with the HOC - Hierarchy of Controls, but I don't believe real people are interested in going through the progressions in the pyramid, as if they were risk management engineers. For that, then what comes into play is to enlighten and assist them in applying the hierarchy of controls, by explaining it again and again for the umpteenth time, because repetition is necessary to make that 'actionable.'

It comes down to this:

It doesn't really matter *what* I think or what you think. What really matters is *how* your workers think....

David A. Varwig, CSP-retired and SCNWO Board Member for





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