



Foot & Leg Protection

Despite its many dangers, construction work can be a safe occupation when we are aware of the hazards involved. However, one of the safety issues we often forget about is proper foot and leg safety. Foot injuries can be debilitating and expensive. Your legs or feet can be crushed, punctured, sprained, or cut. If you can't walk, you're probably not going to be able to drive, stand up, or do your job. Protecting your feet and legs is very important.

The good news is that foot and leg injuries are preventable if you're aware of the hazards present in your work area and you wear the appropriate foot and leg protection. Examples of situations in which you wear foot and/or leg protection include:

- When working with sharp objects such as nails or spikes that could pierce the soles or uppers of ordinary shoes.
- When heavy objects or tools might roll or fall onto your feet.
- When your legs are in danger of being severely cut.

Start with a solid pair of work boots that have puncture-resistant soles and leather uppers. These boots will go a long way toward protecting your feet and ankles from everyday puncture hazards and provide good support for your feet.

Get steel-toed boots to protect your toes, from crushing hazards. If your entire foot could be crushed, there are steel-toed boots that have a metal plate that covers the bridge of your foot too. These boots are often called metatarsal boots because they protect the metatarsal bones that make up the bridge of your foot. In some cases, toe caps will provide sufficient temporary protection for your toes.

When your legs are at risk of being severely cut--if you use chainsaws for example--cut-resistant chaps may be helpful. These chaps are worn on top of pants and can be put on and taken off during the day. They are typically made of Kevlar or a similar, cut-resistant material and can prevent cuts and amputations, though they do not provide crush-protection.

When selecting protecting footwear, make sure your boots fit well from the start. Don't expect boots to stretch or to become more comfortable after some use; they probably won't. Choose footwear that is comfortable and that fits properly. Poorly fitting footwear will cause foot pain and possibly back pain fatigue. That pain can make it difficult for you to work and you may be less likely to wear your boots.

All protective equipment should be inspected before each use. Check foot and leg protection for wear and tear regularly. Look for cracks, holes, separation of materials,



and broken buckles or laces. Check soles for embedded items that could work their way into the boot or could cause you to trip or slip.

SAFETY REMINDER

Tennis shoes, basketball shoes, sandals, and flip flops are NEVER appropriate footwear on a construction site.