

Work Clothes and Safety

"Clothes To Die For". How many times have we heard that phrase before? But it takes on a bit of a different meaning when we apply the heading of safety to it. How many times has it occurred to you that your clothes may cause you to be injured? The fact is that the clothes you wear to the job site can effect your safety. A simple example is the length of your pants. If they are too long you can easily catch your heel in them coming down a ladder or trip yourself while backing up.

Although you don't see very many construction workers wearing ties that can catch in moving machinery, you do see a lot of long sleeves which can pose the same threat as a tie. If your sleeves are long, keep them buttoned at the wrist. Don't roll them up or leave them loose. Also keep your shirt tucked in and your belt tight. This may all sound silly but there are many people who have been maimed or killed because their shirt got caught in moving machinery. Also, it is not a good idea to wear gloves around moving machinery.

Watch your shoes. Make sure they are in good condition and are suited for the job you are doing. Tennis shoes on a construction worker make as much sense as a fireman wearing sandals. Good leather work boots with rubber soles are best for the construction site. In many cases steel toed boots are a requirement. In cold weather, rubber boots should be worn with woolen inner boots or heavy woolen socks. Never work in wet boots or shoes.

Keep your clothes clean. Clothes that are dusty and greasy can cause skin irritations. Clothes that are soaked with oil and grease can catch fire from a spark or cigarette. For keeping warm, wool is about the best. Two layers of lightweight wool are warmer than one very heavy layer. Wool absorbs perspiration but if it gets soaked the best thing to do if you can't change clothes is to keep moving. Wool gloves are also warmer than leather or cotton gloves. In cold weather, if you need leather gloves for protection, wear wool-lined leather or wool gloves inside the leather ones.

If you are in cold weather don't play Mr. Macho or Ms. Cool by not wearing enough to keep warm. You are most likely going to wind up sick if you're not careful. Remember that the clothes you are wearing don't create heat, they retain the heat of your body. Make sure that your gloves, shoes, collars and belts are loose enough to allow for circulation. And if you don't have enough to keep warm, some paper wrapped around you chest inside your shirt or jacket makes a good wind breaker in an emergency. I am sure you have heard the phrase, "Dressing for Success". I guess that might be true in many cases but when it comes to personal protection let's start a new phrase: "Dressing for Safety".