

How VALUABLE

Is

YOUR

EYESIGHT?

by Greg Harris

Proper safety precautions must be taken when operating a pressure washer, even ones delivering 2000–3000 psi or less. It's especially important to protect your eyes with commercial and industrial pressure washers because as pressure increases, so does the risk for accident or serious injury to the eyes.

Here's a common scenario I hear about regularly when people talk to me about operating a pressure washer without protective eyewear.

A wand is dropped, and a spray of chemicals and hot water goes flying into their face. Or, they point the wand at a surface to be cleaned and when the high pressure spray hits it, paint chips or pieces of dirt, gravel, or wood become airborne and act as projectiles aimed at their faces.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), 2000 workers a day are involved in job-related eye injuries that require medical treatment. About one-third of the injuries are serious enough to send workers to the hospital emergency room.

Pressure washers have the power even at relatively low psi to kick up other things like cement chips, metal slivers, rusty nail bits, staples, and other solid materials that can cause blunt force trauma to the eyeball or eye socket, resulting in a permanent loss of vision.

There's also the potential for chemical burns to one or both eyes from splashes of industrial chemicals or cleaning products, and yet people still fail to see the need for safety goggles when pressure washing.

They give excuses—"the wand points away from me" or "I'm careful" or "I don't need goggles—they get in the way."

The truth is that goggles are necessary and should be worn in any situation when eyes could be injured.

Designed for Comfort; Meets Safety Standards

Goggles don't have to be bulky and uncomfortable. There are models

that are both comfortable and unobtrusive while still offering the most protection possible. Some goggles on the market offer features that are perfectly tailored to people in the pressure washing industry.

For example, when using a pressure washer, it is necessary to have goggles that offer ventilation or fog



resistance. Foggy goggles can even lead to accidents!

The heat from the water as well as the humidity in the air can cause goggles to steam up. Goggles with indirect vents allow airflow while at the same time keeping debris away from your eyes.

A comfortable fit is also important because if goggles don't fit properly, they are not going to be worn. Look for adjustable head straps made of soft, flexible materials and dual-injected rubber seals that help the goggles rest easily on the face.

The goggles should completely cover the eyes and fit close to the face so that chemicals and debris cannot enter through the sides of the goggle. Avoid goggles with large gaps that could allow the intrusion of debris.

For pressure washing, goggles should be hard enough to resist impact, yet flexible enough not to shatter. Eye protection should be

made of shatterproof polycarbonates, never glass.

Goggles featuring interchangeable lenses are available so that the wearer can work in any lighting situation. Since most pressure washing is done outdoors, look for lenses specifically designed for outdoor use. Smoke-tinted lenses reduce brightness,

while amber toned lenses work best in low lighting conditions. Another option is mirrored lenses, which offer the same glare protection as regular sunglasses.

Lastly, a good pair of goggles will be UVA and UVB resistant as well as meet ANSI Z87.1+ standards.

So, when I'm operating any kind of power tool or engine-driven equipment, including my pressure washer, I first reach for a pair of safety goggles.

Next time you're on a job, be sure to outfit yourself with protective equipment. Proper eyewear can prevent loss of vision or serious injury. Remember—when it comes to eyes, you should treat yours as invaluable and protect them accordingly.

Greg Harris is the Director of Industrial Sales at protective eyewear maker Radians in Memphis, TN, and an expert in hearing and eye protection products for the industrial market. He has been in the eye protection industry for 17 years. ◻