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## TOOLBOX TALK

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### **Safety Footwear**

#### **Overview:**

The updated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at Work Regulations Act 2022, seeks to ensure that where risks cannot be controlled by other means, PPE should be correctly identified and put into use where there is a risk of an injury. Safety footwear is an important element of PPE which ensure your feet are protected from hazards such as falling and sharp objects, wet and slippery surfaces. In addition to protecting your feet, safety footwear may reduce the likelihood of tripping, slipping, and falling and reduce fatigue from standing for long periods of time.

Here is an overview of some of the different types of job hazards that could require the use of protective footwear or devices:

- Heavy materials that are being cut with a saw which can fall and strike your foot.
- Handling heavy tools, toolboxes or product which can fall and strike your foot.
- Rolling objects and equipment, such as wheeled toolboxes which can roll over or onto your foot.
- Sharp objects on walking surfaces, such as nails or sharp pieces of metal, which can pierce the soles or side of your shoe or boot.

Two main causes of foot injuries are:

- Treading on sharp objects, such as nails, which pierce the soles of the foot.
- Objects dropping causing crush injuries.

Both types of injury can be minimised by the use of correct safety footwear. Your employer must provide (either free or subsidise) you with safety footwear, where you are exposed to the risk of foot injury. If you are self-employed you must provide your own safety footwear that meets the relevant requirements as outlined below:

#### **Safety Footwear Types:**

Spacepro RAMS state that safety footwear should have steel toecaps and sole protection, which should be puncture resistant if there is a risk of stepping on nails or other objects that could penetrate the foot.

Safety boots with ankle support must be used when walking around site due to uneven ground. Safety shoes/trainers must only be used inside the property.

For site work and for operating within our factory, warehouse and storage hubs, safety boots with steel toecaps and mid-sole protection are mandatory.



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Rigger boots are not always permitted on some sites due to their increased risk of foot injury and slips, trips and falls. This is because the boots are generally a looser fit and when walking on loose ground, the lack of ankle support can result in the foot twisting to the side, risking injury. It is for this reason that we do not recommend the use of rigger boots.

For carpeted properties, it is important that safety shoes or boots are used to maintain grip and foot safety protection in the property. Clean indoor safety shoes can be used for this purpose, or existing safety boots/shoes, with an overshoe cover applied. Working in socks without safety shoes is not permitted and can increase the risk of slips, trips and falls and injury.



Footwear plays an important role in reducing the risk of slips, trips and falls. Footwear should be:

- Suitable for the type of work and work environment.
- Comfortable with an adequate non-slip sole and appropriate tread pattern.
- Checked regularly to ensure treads are not worn away or clogged with contaminants.

### **Getting the Right Fit:**

- Make sure footwear fits snugly at the heel and has enough space in front of the toes.
- Take the socks you will be wearing on the job when you are fitting new footwear.
- Remember that your feet normally swell over the course of the day and during exercise.
- Footwear must grip the heel firmly and provide freedom of movement for the toes.
- Footwear must have a fastening across the instep to prevent the foot from slipping when walking.
- Footwear must have a low, wide-based heel. Flat shoes are recommended.
- Do not use inserts or insoles that do not properly fit the selected protective footwear. They could reduce or eliminate the effectiveness of the footwear.

### **Keeping your Feet Safe:**

- Identify foot hazards for the task/job and make sure you have the right footwear for the job. Watch where you're going and what you're stepping on.
- Ensure you have ankle support and laces that are securely tied.
- Take care of your safety footwear and keep the soles clear and clear of any contaminants.
- Always look after your footwear and replace when it is worn or defective.