

Christa's Story

Christa had done the task a hundred times before—just a routine transfer of a corrosive solvent. Her safety goggles didn't fit well over her prescription glasses, and since it was just a quick test, she left them off.

As she added a neutralizing agent to the sample, a small bubble burst, sending a splash of acidic fluid to her face. Without the full coverage and protection of proper safety eyewear, her eyes were left vulnerable.

The pain was immediate. Emergency flushing helped, but the damage was done. The chemical had burned through the cornea before the rinse could take full effect.

After an emergency trip to the optometrist for urgent care, Christa spent two weeks in the hospital, underwent two surgeries, and was off work for over a month. Her vision in the right eye was permanently impaired.



Types of Safety Eyewear in the Chemical Lab

Chemical labs are high-risk environments for eye injuries. Common hazards include chemical splashes and burns, as well as flying debris and particulates.

To combat these risks, workers should be equipped with the right type of safety eyewear, matched to the hazards they face on the job.

- **Safety glasses:** Protects against impact but does not provide protection from liquids and dust/debris.
- **Safety goggles (sealed):** Provides a tight seal around the eyes to protect from dust and debris particulates. D3- and D4-rated goggles may also provide protection from procedures involving liquids and particulate matter. The "D3" marking on safety glasses or goggles indicates that they meet the droplet and splash protection requirements. This means the eyewear is designed to protect your eyes from liquids and splashes, making it suitable for use in environments where such hazards exist, like laboratories.
- **Face shields:** Used in conjunction with safety goggles or glasses to provide additional protection. Many organizations require employees to wear both their safety eyewear and a face shield for maximum protection. The Alberta Association of Optometrists also recommends the additional layer of protection.

For workers who need vision correction, prescription safety eyewear eliminates the need to wear ill-fitting goggles over regular glasses. Employers see value in productivity, compliance and lower rates of injuries when they provide prescription safety eyewear to their employees.



The “Perfect Fit”

Incorrect fitting eyewear is almost as dangerous as no eyewear at all. If safety glasses slide, fog up, or don't seal properly, they leave workers vulnerable to injury and in almost every case, increase costs to the employer from downtime. For those who wear prescription lenses, the challenge is even greater to find the perfect fit, comfort, and durability.

Research has shown that common reasons workers forgo proper safety eyewear include poor fit, discomfort, fogging, and scratched lenses. Standard-issue safety goggles often don't fit well over their frames, leading to gaps in protection and increased risk of injury.

That's why custom-fit, prescription safety eyewear is essential. It ensures:

- Full protection from hazards
- Comfort for long shifts
- Clear vision without compromise

Finding prescription safety eyewear is not easy! However, programs like Eyesafe, a non-profit prescription safety eyewear program administered by the Alberta Association of Optometrists, are helping bridge this gap.

Eyesafe has been providing an occupational safety vision program for well over 50 years, partnering with industry and employers of all sizes across Alberta to manage their employees' safety prescription eyewear needs.

In fact, Eyesafe has grown to become the largest single provider of prescription safety eyewear, thanks to its expertise and industry tenure, level of service, and local presence. 19 of the 20 largest industrial employers in Alberta use the program.

“When a company contacts us to join Eyesafe, we meet with them to find out what their company safety eyewear policy requirements are for approved frames and lenses. In most cases, the companies don't have a policy. We work with the companies to help develop their policy” says Al Amarshi, Director of Eyesafe. “We'll also ensure that their policy meets Alberta OH&S regulations to ensure compliance to the necessary safety requirements.”

Once the policy details are determined, they are entered into Eyesafe's order management system. Managers or employees can then generate a job ticket, which they can take to one of over 600 participating optometrists across Alberta to get fit for their own prescription safety eyewear. The ticket outlines the approved frames, lenses, and approved coatings, ensuring each employee receives eyewear that meets both safety standards and their individual prescription needs, fit perfectly to their measurements. It's a win-win situation as the company sees immediate productivity gains and a drastic reduction with issues of non-compliance to wearing safety eyewear.

Many companies have locations in multiple provinces. Eyesafe can easily accommodate orders in various other provinces through their close ties to other similar provincial programs managed by each respective optometric association.



The Eyesafe™ Advantage

Eyesafe is more than a safety eyewear provider—Eyesafe chooses to be a partner in protecting the eye health of your employees.

Here's what Eyesafe offers participating companies should they want to join the family of Alberta companies wanting prescription safety eyewear for their employees:

- **Comprehensive protection options:** The widest range of safety frames, including standard safety glasses to sealed eyewear rated D3 or D4 for droplet and splash protection.
- **Tailored eye protection:** Eyesafe help companies assess hazards and develop policies that meet Alberta Occupational Health and Safety regulations at no additional cost
- **No-cost program set-up:** Eyesafe works with you to ensure every employee gets the right eyewear—at no charge to your organization.
- **Significant savings:** Savings on prescription safety eyewear of up to 60% off regular retail prices, whether the company or the worker pays.
- **Ongoing support:** Eyesafe believes in overseeing your employee's overall eye health. The program provides educational materials, on-site presentations with optometrists, and resources to promote long-term eye health, all at no cost to the employer.

A Vision for Safety

Eye injuries are not just painful. They're costly, disruptive, and often preventable. Ensuring you and your team have access to properly fitted, task-specific, and if needed, prescription-compatible safety eyewear is not a luxury—it's a responsibility.

It means investing in a program that supports your organization's safety goals, protects your workforce, and helps you build a culture of safety. Doing so keeps you and your team safe, productive, and protected.