

Safety Tips

Footwear Safety Guidelines



When getting dressed for work, we all know that it is important to dress for comfort and safety, but footwear is an important item that is often overlooked.

Choose Appropriate Footwear to Wear at Work

Over 20% of all disabling workplace injuries are caused by slips, trips and falls. Footwear is a frequent cause of slips, trips and falls. Wearing the right shoes is essential to working safely. Open shoes, high heels, sandals or thongs are generally not recommended as footwear in a school or general work setting. Shoes should be sturdy with slip-resistant soles and low heels, but be aware that no one type of non-slip footwear can prevent the wearer from slipping on every surface type.

On wet days, it is recommended that you wear non-slip rubber or neoprene soled shoes.

For winter weather, wear shoes or boots that provide traction on snow and ice such as rubber and neoprene composite. Avoid plastic and leather soles. Remove wet shoes when you arrive at work and change to appropriate footwear for your job.

In summer, flip flops are a flop. Flip flops may feel comfortable in the heat of the summer and are fine to wear around a pool, but they are not sensible and safe to wear to work.

- Accidents are caused by flip flops slipping off the foot and from the foot slipping off of them causing the wearers to trip and fall.
- Flip-flops offer little to no protection against stubbed toes, abrasions, cuts, bruises, puncture wounds, or having a heavy object smash your foot.
- According to podiatrists and orthopedists, the spongy sole and lack of support of flip-flops causes the foot to roll inward, known as pronation, which is the source of a host of foot problems.

- The lack of support offered by flip flops can cause foot arch, ankle, knee, hip and back sprains, strains and pain.
- Having to grip the flip-flop by clenching the toes can lead to arch strain and pain. Flip flops don't hold on the foot like most shoes do, so you use the tendons and muscles to hold them on. Overusing the tendons can lead to tendonitis.
- Another danger of the thong type of flip flop (the type where it is held on with a thong between the big and second toe) is that the thong can cause blisters through rubbing, and can aggravate athlete's foot.
- Additionally, it is not safe to wear flip-flops while driving, as they are not anchored to the feet and can get lodged under the gas pedal or brake.

In selecting shoes for work, it is recommended that you use these tips from the American Podiatric Medical Association:

- Since foot size and shape can change over time, each time you go to buy shoes find an experienced shoe fitter to measure you. Have your feet measured while you're standing.
- Try shoes on both feet. Many people have one foot larger than the other. Buy shoes to fit the bigger foot.
- Shop for shoes in the afternoon. Your feet tend to swell during the day, and it's best to buy shoes when your feet are their normal size.
- Remember, new shoes should be comfortable right away, a "break-in" period should not be necessary.
- Footwear should be long enough, wide enough, and deep enough to wear without rubbing or constricting any part of your feet.

- Sturdy, cushioned shoes with leather or canvas uppers are recommended. They should be comfortable enough to let the toes wiggle, but not loose enough to cause the foot to slide and rub along the sides.
- Stay away from shoes with pointy toes or high heels as they cause added pressure to shift to your toes. Flat shoes with a low, wide-based heel are recommended.
- Recognize the signs of ill-fitting shoes. For example, corns and calluses are caused by friction from skin rubbing against bony areas of the feet, usually caused by shoes that don't fit properly.
- Inspect footwear regularly. When they wear out, dispose of them and purchase new ones. Excessive wearing of the outer sole, loss of shoe counter support, or wearing out in the midsole indicate it's time to replace the shoe. Replace laces that are worn out or too long. Tie all shoes with laces tightly.



Who Needs Protective Footwear?

Employees must wear protective footwear when their work involves a risk of foot injury from sharp items which may puncture the feet, or falling or rolling objects crushing the feet, or when electrical hazards are present. At Nassau BOCES, this includes, but is not limited to, custodial and maintenance workers

Employees who need protective footwear are responsible for purchasing their own footwear. The footwear must be ANSI approved. Protective footwear must be cleaned and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions. It should be checked regularly for cuts, holes, worn soles, and other damage, which can reduce protection and are a signal that the footwear needs to be replaced.



DISCLAIMER: This Safety Tips Sheet is being provided for educational purposes only and addresses common reasons for accidents. It is not intended to imply fault or negligence on the part of any employee. It is the law, policy, and intent of Nassau BOCES to provide a safe and healthful workplace. However, the basic responsibility for safety and health rests with all BOCES employees. The measures contained herein can help employees to ensure their safety.

Although the information and recommendations contained in this Safety Tips Sheet have been compiled from sources believed to be reliable, the Office of the Nassau BOCES Safety Coordinator makes no guarantee as to the correctness, sufficiency or completeness of such information or recommendations. Other or additional safety measures may be required under particular circumstances.

For more information call the Safety Hotline 396-2400.