Foot Protection Meeting

Meeting Objectives
To understand the importance of wearing safety shoes and the types of shoes that are available to protect the wearer from different hazards. The result should be that only approved safety shoes or sturdy street shoes are worn on the job, as appropriate.

Suggested Materials to Have on Hand
- Samples of approved safety shoes
- Samples of shoes that should not be worn on the job (e.g., sandals, run-down dress shoes, etc.).

Introduction/Overview
Although you depend more on your feet to get you around than you do your car, you probably pay more attention to the tires on your car than you do to the shoes on your feet.
But your shoes are an important safety feature—or a hazard to your physical safety.

Too many people wear just any old thing on their feet at work, and the accident statistics show it. The National Safety Council reported that in a recent year there were 130,000 disabling foot injuries, plus another 40,000 toe injuries on the job. Most of those could have been prevented by wearing the proper shoes.

General Hazards
The main hazards to your feet on the job are:
- Having heavy objects fall on them
- Having heavy objects roll on them
- Stubbing or banging your toes on something heavy.

Another on-the-job hazard that doesn't usually cause foot injuries but is a result of not wearing the right shoes is slipping. There is also the possibility of burns or chemical contact if safety shoes don't fit correctly or aren't made of the right material to protect against the hazards of a particular job.

OSHA Regulations
OSHA has a regulation on foot protection (29 CFR 1910.136), which states that "Each affected employee shall wear protective footwear when working in areas where there is a danger of foot injuries due to falling or rolling objects, or objects piercing the sole, and where such employee's feet are exposed to electrical hazards."
Protective footwear purchased after July 5, 1994 shall comply with ANSI Z41-1991. Protective footwear purchased before July 5, 1994 shall comply with the ANSI standard "USA Standard for Men's Safety-Toe Footwear," Z41.1-1967.

Identifying Hazards
The type of footwear required by the standard depends on the kinds of hazards you encounter on the job. You need sturdy shoes no matter what you do. But you also have to think about the specific hazards you face to decide what to wear on your feet.
You need protective shoes of some sort if there could be a risk of having something fall on your feet, roll over them, or bump them because you:
- Do material handling.
- On wet surfaces

- Where nails or other sharp objects could puncture your shoes.
- With electricity
- Work with or around heavy equipment, or
- You also need protection for your feet if you work:

Working with corrosives or hazardous substances requires foot protection, too, as those substances could penetrate normal shoes.

And we all need protection from slipping and falling.

Protection against Hazards

Now let's see what you need to protect yourself from foot hazards.
Basic foot protection is a sturdy shoe or boot made of leather, rubber, or a synthetic. It has an impact-resistant toe—usually steel—and non-skid soles with rubber or synthetic treads to prevent slips and falls.

The American National Standard for safety-toe footwear referred to in the OSHA standard deals with the strength of the toe box. The top classification, 75, will withstand the impact of 75 pounds per square inch falling on your foot. As further protection in jobs where heavy objects could land on your feet, you might also wear foot guards made of aluminum alloy, fiberglass, or galvanized steel over your shoes.
Other possible protections you may need in your shoes or boots are:

- Metal insoles or reinforced soles to protect against puncture
- Non-conducting soles and no nails in the shoes themselves if you work with electricity
- Rubber boots or shoes or leather shoes with wooden soles if you work in wet conditions
- Heat-resistant soles if you work in areas where the floor gets hot
- Easy-to-remove "gaiters" if you could get splashed by hot metal or by welding sparks
- Impermeable rubber or neoprene boots to wear over or instead of work boots if you work with corrosives or hazardous chemicals.

Safety Procedures

Even if you're working in an area or on a job with none of the hazards we've just discussed, your feet still need some protection. There is a basic minimum standard for what you wear as shoes to work and that means a sturdy shoe with low heels and non-skid soles.

That also means no sandals. And it means no old run-down dress shoes. Work is not the place where old shoes go to die. If anything, you need better shoes here than you do in most places.
Another important part of foot safety is fit. A shoe should be the right size and it should be comfortable.

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What are some reasons your feet need protection on the job?
2. What are the basic criteria for safe work shoes or boots?
3. What might you use to protect against things falling on your foot?
4. What kind of added protection could keep your shoes from being punctured by nails or other sharp objects?
5. What kind of footgear do you need if you work with corrosives or hazardous chemicals?
6. What kinds of shoes should never be worn on the job?
7. Are there any other questions?

Wrap-Up

Don't forget your feet when you're thinking safety on the job. You sure won't get much done without them, and they're a frequently ignored—and injured—part of the body. You need good sturdy shoes that are reinforced to protect you from the hazards you encounter. They should fit comfortably and be in good condition.
Think on your feet—and about them.

Sample Handout

Foot Safety Do's and Don'ts Checklist	
DO:	
	Wear sturdy shoes with impact-resistant toes, low heels, and nonskid soles on the job.
	Wear shoes with metal insoles or reinforced soles for puncture hazards.
	Wear shoes with non-conducting soles if you work with electricity.
	Wear shoes with wooden soles if you work on wet surfaces.
	Wear shoes with heat-resistant soles if you work on hot surfaces.
	Wear foot guards over your work shoes if they're assigned.
	Wear impermeable rubber or neoprene boots if you work with corrosives or hazardous chemicals.
	Wear shoes that are comfortable.
DON'T:	
	Wear the wrong shoes for the job.
	Wear street shoes unless they're approved for the job.
	Wear shoes that are torn, run down, or otherwise offer less than full protection.
	Wear sandals.
	Wear old, run-down dress shoes.