

By Matt Taylor



# FIREPROOFING OPERATIONS

## Eye Protection: An “Under Your Nose” Solution

For many years we at OCP Contractors in Holland, Ohio, have been working on a successful solution for eye protection during fireproofing operations. We have attempted to use safety glasses, face shields, tear-a-way face shields, goggles and even a device created for the wand. Unfortunately, none provided practical protection. Glasses and goggles fogged, and face shields were splattered with fireproofing material to the extent that vision was severely impaired. These problems encouraged workers to abandon all eye protection and risk eye injury with resulting production loss.

For many years, fireproofers went to work assuming no solution for this hazard existed. Only large quantities of eye wash provided any degree of relief Mathew Taylor, OCP Con-

tractor’s safety director, notes: “I practically gave up all hope and began to think our workers were right, but as a safety professional, this was a hard thing to except.

“I was walking through a local hardware store one day looking for something unrelated to eye protection when I saw the solution. It was hard to believe that the solution was always this close. I had seen this display many times while looking for a reasonable solution for this hazardous operation. It was simple and right under my nose. The solution was a device built and designed for a completely different occupation within a different industry. I simply overlooked this type of protection.”

Lumberjacks use a screen style face shield with safety glasses underneath

the shield. The resulting combination prevents fogging, stops scratches and clotting to the shield, and allows for clear vision. The shield connects to a hard hat and won’t interfere with the use of a dust mask.

Clayton Davenport, an OCP employee from 886 Finishers and Plasterer’s Union in Toledo, Ohio, provided positive evidence from the field: “The hardhat with the mesh face shield and earmuffs makes doing this job much more comfortable. The ratchet-type strap on the webbing keeps the hardhat on while looking up, and the earmuffs not only block the noise but also keep the material from building up on the side of your face, in your ears or the face shield. The screen on the face shield is perfect. It not only keeps the material out of your eyes, but after wear-

ing all day, I no longer have the skin irritation around my eyes and face. Also it's easy to clean by just hitting the mask and allowing the material to fall to the ground, and you can go right back to spraying in seconds. I would recommend this to anyone doing this operation.”

When the screen face shield becomes clogged or starts to impair vision, the worker simply bends, strikes the shield with his hand and the fireproofing falls off. This allows the worker to quickly return to spraying. This process improves productivity by reducing downtime required to change glasses or face shields, cleaning eyes or eye injuries.

Reducing the variety of face shields and using standard safety glasses without

continual eyewashes realize equipment savings. Worker comfort is drastically improved by restricting fireproofing material from the worker's eyes and face. This solution is consistent with OCP Contractors' philosophy of providing productive safety solutions rather than pitting production rates against safety.

We hope you find the above suggestion helpful to your operation. 📧

#### **About the Author**

Matt Taylor is safety director for OCP Contractors and has spoken on the subject of safety at several meetings of the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries—International. The company won AWCI's Excellence in Construction Safety award in 2002.