

Information ABOUT THE ECLIPSE

If you will have any crews working along the projected path of the solar eclipse on April 8th you should consider a tool-box talk explaining your guidance for your employees during the eclipse. I do believe that there may be some responsibility under the OSHA General Duty Clause to at least educate your employees on safety measures to be taken during the eclipse.

The General Duty Clause requires you provide a place of employment free of “recognized” hazards causing or likely to cause death or serious injury. To me looking directly at the sun during the eclipse would fall under this definition as would working on an elevated area or a crowded worksite in total darkness. The potential for eye injury may even be greater if your employees are not working in the area of the total eclipse, but in an area where the eclipse will be only partial. I see the temptation for employees to look up at a partial eclipse to see how much of the sun is covered.

So, I think you eliminate the former potential hazard by adopting a work rule for the eclipse prohibiting employees from looking directly at the sun during the eclipse. You should then instruct your employees that they are NOT to look directly at the sun during the eclipse. While this should be self-evident for any adult, we can take nothing for granted when it comes to safety and protecting the people who work for you. If you do not wish to take a chance that an employee will look directly at the sun during the eclipse (I think this is more likely to occur if you are in the path of the TOTAL eclipse), you should obtain either welders' goggles or helmets of dark glasses which are sold as providing protection for the eyes while looking directly at the sun during the total eclipse.

I suggest that to negate the second hazard, which would be tripping or falling that you remove your crews from any roof or active work area on which they are working about 15 minutes

before the eclipse (whether total or partial) begins. You could gather them together on the ground or away from the active work area for a “coffee break” and while you are together with them remind them that they are NOT to look directly at the sun during the eclipse.

It might be a good idea to meet with your crews at the start of the day to tell them how you will be handling the eclipse. Tell them that they will be stopping work and exiting the roof and/or active work area when directed to do so by their supervisor, but at least 15 minutes before the eclipse begins and that they will remain together on the ground and away from the active work area until the eclipse is completed and the site supervisor releases them to get back to work.

I am concerned about providing dark glasses to the crews or telling employees not to look directly at the eclipse unless they are wearing special dark glasses. Sunglasses will not provide adequate protection and your employees should be told that and while you have them together the

site supervisor should keep an eye on them to discourage anyone with no glasses or just standard sunglasses from looking directly at the eclipse.

Again, my major concern from a safety perspective is permitting your employees to remain on the roof or in the active work area and to continue working during the eclipse. There is no way they will stand still during this time and I see a real danger where they could trip over something they cannot see and fall down. It will be difficult to determine the effects of a partial eclipse on employees in an active work area as far as interfering with their ability to continue to work safely, even in partial darkness.

So, in summary be sure to cover these bullet points:

- Resist the temptation to look at the sun during the eclipse (whether total or not in your location) without solar glasses, those

that are specifically designed for viewing the sun.

- If you are working outdoors in the path of the total eclipse do not do so during the period of total darkness.
- If you are working at an elevation above the ground (such as on a roof) get to the ground at least 15 minutes before totality begins and remain there until the eclipse ends.
- If you are driving in any area that will be affected by the eclipses, be extra careful of other drivers, who might be paying more attention on the eclipse than where they are or what they are doing.
- Finally, do not attempt to photograph the eclipse. Looking at the eclipse through the camera lens, such as on your smart phone will concentrate the solar rays and this may cause serious eye damage.