



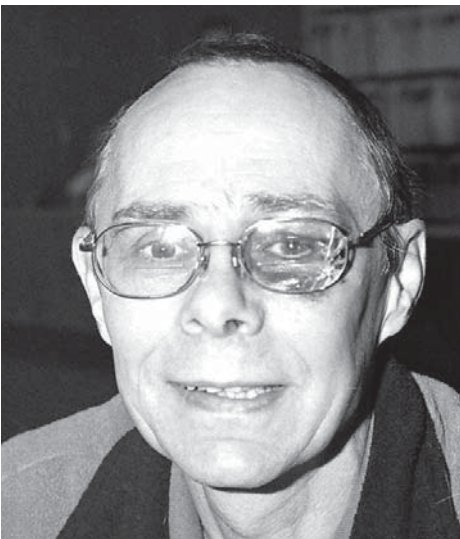
Vision at Work

OCCUPATIONAL VISION PLAN NEWSLETTER

Worker escapes eye loss in industrial accident

Weeks after the accident, Michel Montagne still jumps when he hears a loud noise.

Given the terrifying experience he went through at work, it's no wonder he's still a little nervous more than a month and a half later.



Wearing safety glasses prevented Michel Montagne from losing an eye.

At the time, Montagne was a maintenance person in a Kamloops brewery. He was responsible for ensuring the bottling line ran smoothly and efficiently. But the sensitive dosatron machine that mixed pressurized water with the food-grade lubricant needed to service the line was, in his words, "a troublesome piece of equipment."

Several times a week, it would break down, and Montagne would have to turn off the water, unscrew the hard plastic dome, and adjust the wrenching fins inside before the line could start up again.

In order to inspect the fins, Montagne would often remove his safety glasses in



order to see more clearly. So he's not sure why, when the machine broke down that day in early July, some instinct made him keep his safety glasses on.

Wherever that instinct came from, it was the right one.

"Out of nowhere, there was a loud pop and it felt like I had been punched in the head,"

he recalls. "My glasses were knocked right off, and all I could see from the left side was a blinding white light. I started to panic."

He ran to the bathroom and saw that he was covered in blood. As co-workers scrambled to find help and call an ambulance, he asked them, "How's my eye?" terrified that it had been crushed by the impact. He repeated his question to the paramedics who rushed him to the emergency room, but only after an agonizing wait could an optometrist confirm that, miraculously, his left eye had not suffered permanent damage.

Dr. Eugene A. Ebata, the Kamloops-based optometrist who examined Montagne in the emergency room, was amazed that his vision had not been compromised. "From the damage to his safety glasses, I would surmise that he narrowly escaped devastating trauma," Dr. Ebata says. "Had he not been wearing his safety glasses, he would have lost some vision, and perhaps even an eye."

Each day, when he looks in the mirror and sees the scar that required five stitches, he is reminded of how narrowly he missed serious injury. "I thank God my eye is ok, and that I have my sight," he says.

He hopes others will learn from his example. "Insist on the right eye protection at work, and wear it at all times. You can't predict when an accident will happen, so be prepared."

▶ Aging workers at increased risk for eye disease, warns the B.C. Association of Optometrists

One in four workers in B.C. is approaching retirement and will be facing an increased risk of developing several sight-impairing eye diseases, warns the B.C. Association of Optometrists.

“Once you reach your sixties, the risk of developing age-related eye problems increases significantly,” says B.C. optometrist Dr. Elaine Kerr. “People 60 and over need to be aware of the risks and make regular, comprehensive eye exams a part of their health maintenance regimen.”

Diseases that become more prevalent as people age include diabetic eye disease, cataracts, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Diabetes becomes much more common as we age. Complications may include bleeding in the retina, possibly resulting in scarring or retinal detachment. This may result in serious vision impairment or even blindness.

Treatment can be effective, but it is critically important to detect these complications as early as possible. People with diabetes should have their eyes examined at least once a year, or more frequently if recommended by their eye doctor.

As they age, people are also more susceptible to cataracts – a clouding of the lens of the eye due, in part, to exposure to ultraviolet rays over time. The effect on the person’s vision is like smearing grease over the lens of a camera. During the early stages of a cataract, a patient may not notice any symptoms; however, an optometrist can identify the condition during an eye exam and help to manage its progression. Changing the lens prescription can improve the vision, but eventually surgery may be necessary. The optometrist will refer to a cataract surgeon when appropriate.

Unlike many other conditions, glaucoma – one of the most common causes of blindness in Canada – can strike at any age, although the risk increases with age. This disease of the optic nerve is usually caused by an elevation of pressure within the eye, which, if untreated, can result in permanent nerve damage and loss of peripheral vision (tunnel vision).

In the most common form of glaucoma there are usually no symptoms at all until peripheral vision is lost, earning it the nickname “silent thief of sight.” In a rarer form of the disease, there is a more sudden rise in the pressure within the eye.

The patient may experience pain, blurred vision and coloured halos around lights. The latter requires immediate attention. There is no cure, but early detection can slow down the disease’s progress.

Age-related macular degeneration causes an irreversible loss of central vision. The macula is a small area of the retina at the back of the eye responsible for sharp central vision. Sometimes as a person ages, the macula deteriorates, causing loss of central vision. A family history of the disease can increase your chances of developing AMD, and smoking has also been shown to increase the risk. As with glaucoma, AMD can be managed but not cured.

“Many age-related eye diseases don’t produce symptoms in the early stages, but early diagnosis and treatment can prolong or save your sight,” says Dr. Kerr. “That’s why regular eye exams with an optometrist are so important, even if you see well and think your eyes are healthy.”

Optometrists specialize in examining, diagnosing, treating, managing and preventing diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye and related structures. Adults 19 to 64 should have an eye exam every two years. People with diabetes or age 65 or older should have an eye exam at least once a year.

For more information on eye health, or to locate an optometrist near you, visit www.ovp.bc.ca

The British Columbia Association of Optometrists publishes *Vision at Work*, the Occupational Vision Plan newsletter. The newsletter is available online at www.ovp.bc.ca

OVP, a program of the B.C.A.O., meets the needs of more than 300 client companies throughout British Columbia. Protecting workers’ eyes for more than 20 years, OVP has a network of over 270 doctors of optometry participating in more than 80 communities throughout B.C.

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Comments/ideas

Vision at Work, as well as our website, is always looking for articles, comments, ideas, interesting stories, or questions from the workplace. Please e-mail us at ovp@optometrists.bc.ca



British Columbia
Association of
Optometrists

www.whatcouldbemoreimportant.com

Welcome aboard

The British Columbia Association of Optometrists welcomes **Jocelyn dela Cruz**, new Administrative Assistant for the Occupational Vision Plan. With her experience in the health care field, Jocelyn is a great addition to the optometric family.

The British Columbia Association of Optometrists welcomes these new client companies participating in the Occupational Vision Plan:

Amgen British Columbia	Burnaby
Marlen Manufacturing	Kamloops
Northern Trailer Ltd.	Kamloops
Peak Energy Services	Calgary, AB
Target Products Ltd.	Abbotsford
Transwest Mining Services	Acheson, AB

▶ | WorkSafe BC releases eye injury stats

As reported in the Fall 2006 issue of *Vision at Work*, 2005 saw the most dramatic rise in eye injuries in the past five years. The bad news, according to the latest statistics released by WorkSafe BC in June 2007, is that eye injury claims have continued to rise in 2006. The good news is the rate of increase for injuries is slower than the previous year.

Other key findings from the 2006 statistics include: the cost of claims is down 30 per cent in 2006 as compared to 2005 and the number of lost work days declined by 8 per cent. These numbers may suggest that even though eye injury incidents are still trending upwards, the seriousness of those injuries is lessening, which would be very good news for B.C. industry.

2006 saw a substantial increase in the number of new companies joining the British Columbia Association of Optometrists' Occupational Vision Plan. And more employees visited their Occupational Vision Plan Optometrist throughout 2006 to have their eyes examined and fitted with safety eyewear that meets CSA and Worksafe BC requirements.

It is apparent that industry and their employees benefit by companies adopting and implementing the Occupational Vision Plan at their worksites. To learn more about how to improve workplace safety, or to join the Occupational Vision Plan, visit www.ovp.bc.ca

Year	Total claims accepted	Cost of claims	Work days lost
2002	1678	\$6,034,443	17,021
2003	1626	\$4,987,376	16,539
2004	1711	\$3,817,883	15,211
2005	1829	\$6,442,114	18,704
2006	1885	\$4,559,682	17,300
Total	8729	\$25,841,498	84,775

Notice board

The OVP will participate in the following events in Fall 2007:

Canadian Society of Safety Engineering
2007 Professional Development Conference
& Exhibition
Sept. 9–12 2007
Fairmont Empress Hotel, Victoria, B.C.

Canada's National Centre for Occupational
Health and Safety presents Emerging Health
& Safety Issues from Changing Workplaces:
A Canadian Discussion
Sept. 17–18 2007
Marriott Pinnacle Hotel, Vancouver, B.C.

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