



Safety Bulletin 103

Unchecked eyesight poses safety risk

Many middle-aged UK workers are avoiding attending a sight test and potentially endangering the safety of others as a result.

According to a recent report from the College of Optometrists, one in five drivers aged between 35 and 55 has driven despite knowing they have poor eyesight. The report also found that as many as 9% of middle-aged workers operate heavy machinery, knowing their eyesight is not correct.

In the study, 28% of respondents said they had put off going for an eye test for up to six months after realizing their eyesight had deteriorated and 21% put it off for up to five years.

The main reasons people cited for avoiding going to the opticians were that wearing glasses would make them look older (43%) and the cost of glasses and contact lenses (18%). Middle-aged men were found to be most likely to avoid the opticians, with almost one in three saying they would not go for a test if they noticed a change.

Dr Susan Blakeney, Optometric Adviser to the College of Optometrists, said:

"Middle-age is often characterised by the onset of age-related health problems, and it seems failing eyesight is very low down on the list of priorities for most people."

She added that this attitude is *"extremely worrying"*, particularly because people in this age group are continuing to drive.

A separate study, by Specsavers, revealed more worrying statistics. Out of 546 drivers who agreed to participate in a voluntary sight check:

- ✚ 25 were unable to read a number plate at a minimum distance;
- ✚ one person had to be taken to within two metres of the number plate before he was able to read it;
- ✚ 53 drivers were borderline; and
- ✚ 51 drivers admitted that they had never taken an eye examination.



According to the [Workplace Law Handbook 2009](#), employers are under a statutory obligation to provide eyesight tests for their employees, if the workers are Display Screen Equipment users. The purpose of an eye test is to improve the comfort and efficiency of the user by identifying and correcting any vision defects specific to DSE use. There is no evidence that DSE usage causes permanent damage to eyesight; what will occur is that pre-existing eye conditions will be accentuated, which can lead to temporary visual fatigue or headaches.

The Regulations require employers to provide users or operators with an appropriate eye and eyesight test if they request it. The employer has a liability to pay for these tests. However, DSE users are not obliged to have the test.

If you require any further information, clarification or assistance with the above, then please do not hesitate to contact us;

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Source – Workplace Law Network
www.workplacelaw.net