

Standard for Eye and Face Protection against Biological Hazards

Millions of workers are exposed to biological hazards at work. They include physicians, nurses, technicians and other healthcare workers; laboratory and clinical staff; emergency medical technicians, police and firefighters; first aid providers; maintenance and custodial workers who deal with spills or contaminated waste. Many more workers could be exposed in the case of a pandemic or other outbreak of infectious disease.

Workers at risk of infection through accidental contact with mucous membranes that line the eye or nose need to wear eye and face protection. Protective measures include film-type faceshields, which may be attached to respirators or procedure masks, or industrial-type eye and face protectors such as goggles, safety glasses or impact-rated face shields.

Currently there are no standards for eye and face protection against biological hazards. The American National Standard for eye and face protection, ANSI/ISEA Z87.1, addresses impact, particulate, chemical and radiation hazards, but specifically does not cover bloodborne pathogens or other biological hazards. NFPA standards for infection control are aimed at fire departments and emergency medical services.

In response to this need, the Eye and Face Protection Group of the International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) has initiated development of a voluntary standard with the following scope:

This standard sets forth criteria related to the general performance requirements, test methods, and permanent markings of protectors to minimize or prevent eye and face exposure of the wearer to sprays, splashes, or droplets of blood, body fluids, excretions, secretions, and other potentially infectious materials in occupational and educational environments where biological hazards are expected and routine.

The standard would be founded on providing biohazard protection in risk/hazard based categories. It would include specifications and test procedures for coverage, splash resistance, liquid-tight integrity, fluid penetration resistance, impact resistance and optical properties. It would also cover disinfection/decontamination and marking requirements.

ISEA is experienced in the development of voluntary standards, and provides the secretariat for the ANSI Z87 committee. The members of its Eye and Face Protection Group are world leaders in the design, manufacture and marketing of quality eye and face protection products.