



## **CONTACT LENS WEAR**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since 1967, the American Welding Society has received reports concerning welders who have claimed to have had contact lenses fused to their eyes, either by the heat of the arc or by microwave radiation. Not one of these reports has been substantiated, and safety bulletins issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the National Safety Council (NSC) have all refuted that such incidents could possibly have occurred.

The American Optometric Association (AOA) has stated that improvements in lens materials, and in design, fitting, and care procedures, have eliminated many of the problems formerly associated with contact lenses. The Association noted that contact lenses do not make the eye more susceptible to injury nor will they make matters worse if an eye injury accidentally happens.

- The sum of all the research is this—wearing contact lenses poses no problem for welders in most normal situations.

### **GUIDELINES FOR USE OF CONTACT LENSES**

Use the following guidelines, adapted from the Contact Lens Ophthalmologists Association (CLAO), and endorsed by the AWS, where contact lenses are worn in welding situations:

- Wear contact lenses in industrial environments, in combination with appropriate industrial safety eyewear, except where there is likelihood of injury from intense heat, massive chemical splash, highly particulate atmosphere, or where specific regulations prohibit such use.
- Have all employees wearing contact lenses notify their immediate supervisors and the plant safety medical personnel about their use of contacts—let people know you wear them.
- Train all first aid personnel in the proper removal of contact lenses.
- Encourage the wearing of contact lenses in industry for those employees whose central and peripheral vision can be increased by contact lenses, as contrasted to

spectacle lenses. Examples of such employees are those who have had a cataract removed from one or both eyes, those with irregular astigmatism from corneal scars, or keratoconus, and those who are extremely nearsighted.

- Have employees keep a spare pair of contacts or prescription spectacles, or both, in their possession on the job to avoid an inability to function if they should damage or lose a contact lens while working.
- Do not permit safety and medical personnel to discriminate against an employee who can achieve visual rehabilitation by contact lenses, either in job placement or on return to a job category.
- Have safety and medical personnel determine on an individual basis the need for wearing spectacles or contact lenses in jobs which require unique visual performance. Carefully consider also the recommendations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

## **INFORMATION SOURCES**

American Optometric Association. AOA News Release: *It's Safe to Wear Contacts in School Shops and Labs.* St. Louis, Missouri: American Optometric Association, November 1984.

Contact Lens Association of Ophthalmologists. CLAO position paper. New Orleans, Louisiana: Contact Lens Association of Ophthalmologists.

National Safety Council, *"Let's End the Contact Lens Rumor."* National Safety News. Chicago, Illinois: National Safety Council, June 1983.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration. OSHA New Release: *OSHA Eye Experts Dispel Contact Lens Rumors.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor Office of Information, August 9, 1983.