# Laser Pointer Safety FactSheet

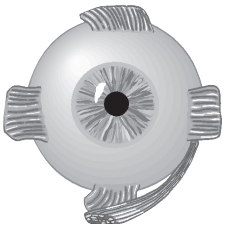
HS02-013B (8-06)

## A Real Danger

Commercial laser pointers have become common tools in the workplace. Most often laser pointers are used as a substitute for the retractable metal pointer used during lectures or presentations. Laser pointers can also be found in construction work as an aid to laying pipe, in building construction for leveling purposes, and in security and police services as an aiming device for firearms. But as familiar as laser pointers have become to many people, they still present a very real occupational hazard.


"Even momentary exposure from a laser pointer can cause discomfort and temporary visual impairment," warns the American Optometric Association (AOA). "There can be glare, similar to that encountered with oncoming headlights at night; flash blindness, such as from a flashbulb; and afterimages, which involve the perception of spots in the field of vision. This temporary visual impairment can be dangerous if the person is engaged in any vision-critical activity."

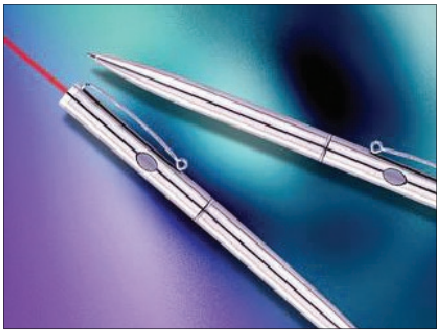
"Glare ceases when the laser beam disappears. Flash blindness and afterimages may last for several minutes. If afterimages persist for several hours, or if a disturbance in vision is apparent, an eye examination should be performed to determine if there is any permanent eye damage."



## How to Protect Yourself and Others

The following tips for safely using laser pointers are courtesy of the AOA and the Laser Institute of America.

- When buying a laser pointer, choose one that is labeled Class II and operates with a wavelength between 630 nm and 680 nm. Maximum output should be less than 5m watts.
- Do not purchase a laser pointer if it does not have a caution or danger sticker on it identifying the class. Report suspicious devices to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- Before you use a laser pointer, either yours or someone else's, read the caution or danger sticker carefully.
- Never point the laser at another person.
- Do not point a laser pointer at mirror-like surfaces. A reflected beam can act like a direct beam on the eye.
- Do not allow children to use laser pointers unless under adult supervision and never as toys.
- Never look directly at the laser beam.
- Never view a laser beam using an optical instrument, such as binoculars or a microscope.



The Texas Department of Insurance,
Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC)
E-mail **resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us**
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

*Safety Violations Hotline*
**1-800-452-9595**
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