



SAFETY TOE VS NON SAFETY TOE FOOTWEAR

TOOLBOX TALK SERIES – PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

September 2025

Video Introduction

We begin today's session by reviewing a video from Ally Safety titled:

"Safety Toe Test: Testing Safety Toe vs. Non-Safety Toe "

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/OfgBJLAbK4>

Why Safety Footwear Matters

Foot injuries are some of the most common—and preventable—injuries on the job. The types of injuries include:

- **Crush injuries** from dropped tools, equipment, or materials
- **Punctures** from nails, glass, or sharp objects on the ground
- **Slips and falls** due to poor traction or wet/icy conditions
- **Ankle sprains** from uneven terrain or lack of support
- **Electric shock** when working near energized equipment without EH-rated boots
- **Cold-related injuries**, such as frostbite, from inadequate insulation during winter

In the Town of Perinton, crews regularly work outdoors, on uneven ground, and in changing weather conditions. That means **your feet are constantly at risk**—and choosing the wrong footwear, or wearing worn-out boots, increases that risk significantly.

Investing in proper safety footwear isn't just about compliance. It's about protecting your health, your ability to work, and your quality of life.

Features of Proper Safety Footwear

Not all boots are created equal. The following features should be present—and in good condition—for your boots to offer the protection you need:



Toe Protection (Steel or Composite Toe)

Prevents serious injury to your toes from falling or rolling objects. Steel toe is often heavier but more resistant to punctures, while composite toe is lighter and non-metallic—useful when working around metal detectors or in cold weather.

Slip-Resistant Soles

Slips are one of the most common workplace injuries. Slip-resistant soles provide traction on wet, oily, or icy surfaces and are a must in municipal operations, especially during snow season or in sewer/stormwater maintenance.

Puncture-Resistant Midsoles

Sharp objects like nails, metal shards, or glass can penetrate standard soles. A puncture-resistant plate—usually made of steel or Kevlar—is essential when walking in construction debris or demolition areas.

Proper Fit and Support

Ill-fitting boots can cause blisters, foot fatigue, and even long-term injuries like plantar fasciitis. Boots should fit snugly but comfortably, especially with your work socks on. Good ankle support is critical for uneven ground or when lifting heavy loads.

Electrical Hazard (EH) Rating

EH-rated boots are designed to protect against open circuits of up to 600 volts. These are necessary if you're working near energized equipment or performing maintenance around live power sources.

Waterproofing and Chemical Resistance

If your work involves water, snow, or chemicals (like fuel, concrete, or cleaning agents), waterproof or chemically resistant boots are essential. Wet feet can lead to trench foot, frostbite, or fungal infections.

Boot Condition and Tread Integrity

Even the best boots become dangerous when worn out. Soles with no tread reduce traction. Cracked leather or separation between the sole and upper can allow water in. Inspect boots daily for wear and damage.



Common Footwear Mistakes

Wearing the wrong footwear—or wearing it incorrectly—can cause injuries even when other PPE is used properly. Here are common mistakes and how to avoid them:

Using Non-Safety Footwear When Safety Footwear is Needed (e.g., sneakers or hiking boots)

Sneakers and casual shoes are not designed for workplace hazards. They provide no toe protection, limited grip, and minimal support. Always wear work boots rated for safety by ANSI/ASTM standards when the task requires safety footwear.

Choosing Style Over Function

Fashion boots may look good but don't offer job-specific protection. Buy boots designed for the work you do—even if they're heavier or less attractive.

Letting Footwear Become Worn Out

Boots with smooth soles, holes, or torn linings are no longer protective. Check for signs of deterioration and replace your footwear before it fails.

Wearing the Wrong Size

Boots that are too tight restrict circulation, while loose boots reduce ankle stability. Always try boots on with your normal work socks and walk in them before purchase.

Not Cleaning or Drying Footwear

Leaving boots wet overnight damages materials and shortens their lifespan. Clean your boots at the end of each shift and store them in a dry place to prevent mold, rot, or stiffening.

Town of Perinton Footwear Policy

All employees must follow the Town's safety footwear standards to ensure their protection and reduce liability.

Required Conditions

- When safety footwear is required, it must meet **ANSI Z41** or **ASTM F2413** standards
- Toe protection is required in all environments with risk of falling or rolling objects



- Slip-resistant soles are mandatory in areas exposed to water, ice, oil, or other slippery materials
 - EH-rated boots must be worn when working near live electrical components or circuits
 - Employees must inspect footwear **daily** for damage or wear
 - Footwear must be kept clean, dry, and in good condition
 - Employees are expected to **replace boots promptly** when safety features are compromised
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Self-Check: Is Your Footwear Safe?

Use this checklist to evaluate your current boots or shoes:

- Are your boots ANSI or ASTM rated for safety?
- Do they have steel or composite toe?
- Is the tread deep and intact?
- Do they provide ankle support?
- Do they fit comfortably with your work socks?
- Are they dry and free from water damage?
- Do they offer puncture resistance?
- Are they EH-rated (if required)?
- Are they free from cracks, holes, or sole separation?

If you answered “No” to any item, it may be time to repair or replace your footwear.

Final Reminders

- Your boots are your first line of defense against workplace hazards.
- Wearing the right footwear isn’t optional—it’s essential.
- Don’t wait for a problem to replace worn or inappropriate boots.
- Daily inspections help prevent long-term injuries.
- Proper footwear helps you stay safe, efficient, and productive.

