

Glasses by American Optical Fight A Glaring Flaw of Video Terminals

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Of the Regional Staff

SOUTHBRIDGE — American Optical Corp. has expanded its protective eyewear line from the factory — its traditional area of use — into the office.

The company's newest product, videoterminal glasses, known as VGs, are designed to reduce causes of eyestrain, blurred vision and headaches commonly associated with frequent use of computer terminals.

The company said such causes include: glare from windows and office lighting; reflections off the terminal screen; reflections off the user's own eyeglasses; and low contrast between the text and background of the terminal display.

Robert E. Lee, vice president, said the new product is a logical extension for the 150-year-old maker of personal protective equipment.

"Certainly, the traditional hazards of heavy industry do not exist in the modern office environment, but it is also true that today more people are being called on to work with their minds and eyes, leaving the routine and heavy tasks to machines," Lee said.

Protecting the Eyes

He continued, "It is, therefore, reasonable to apply the same type of occupational specialization to eyewear that we have long accepted in gloves, shoes, etc. for the heavy industries. We certainly wouldn't expect a foundry worker to use general purpose gloves or shoes. Why shouldn't we give the same degree of concern to the eyes of office workers?"

Neal P. David, advertising and promotion managers for the safety division of AO, said the new product was the result of complaints. "We had our own in-house complaints; we had customers calling up and asking us what we could recommend for VDT users who were complaining about eye discomfort; and, of course, there was the media, both magazines and newspapers carrying articles talking about the eye-related problems associated with VDT use."

David said the company worked on the product about 18 months, started testing it last October, released it in a limited New England market earlier



Telegram Photo

Maureen Gardner of American Optical's customer service for safety products division wears a pair of the company's new videoterminal glasses.

this year and then released it nationally about two months ago.

The company said VGs improve intensity contrast as well as color contrast on videoterminals. The company said this results in a more distinct image which is easier to read.

The glasses, styled like regular glasses, come with lenses in magenta, gray or blue for use with VDTs with green, black and white and amber displays respectively. The glasses are available with prescription or non-prescription lenses. The company said the glasses meet the requirement standard for occupational safety eyewear in restricted areas.

Besides improving contrast, the company said VGs also reduce the amount of ambient light reaching the eyes. Ambient light (from surroundings) can distract from the video display. The company said the lenses have a "very low reflectance compared with ordinary glasses. This means people who ordinarily wear

glasses will have to contend with fewer reflections off their lenses."

More Productivity

Dr. Brian Roy, AO staff optometrist, said besides helping VDT users cope with visual discomfort, the glasses offer "an increase in productivity of VDT operators ... from improved eye comfort at the work station." He said by using VGs, a company shows it is responsive to employees' occupational needs in the office as well as in the factory. Initial tests showed that employees using the glasses, "have experienced fewer eye-related problems. In many instances people suffering from 'eyestrain' have found increased comfort with VGs."

Local distributor for the product is REFCO Inc., 730 Main St., Boylston.

AO sells protective eyewear for home and industry including prescription and non-prescription glasses, goggles, respirators, ear protectors and hard hats. It also supplies ophthalmic frames, lenses and soft contact lenses.