



**University  
of Victoria**

Occupational  
Health, Safety  
& Environment

# LASER POINTERS



“Laser” stands for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation.

Hand-held laser pointers have evolved from relatively benign boardroom tools into potentially hazardous devices found readily online and in local hardware stores. However, not all laser pointers are dangerous. Class 2 (less than 5 mW) red lasers originally sold as presentation devices remain safe workplace tools.

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## CONCERNS

- Laser pointers are a million times brighter than a light bulb and brighter and more damaging than looking at the sun.
- The brightness of laser light can damage the eyes of anyone who looks directly into the beam for more than a minute and a half.
- A split-second look can result in a temporary condition called flash blindness.
- If the laser beam is projected through a piece of optical equipment, such as a telescope or binoculars, the laser beam could burn a tiny spot on the retina or result in blindness

## GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING A LASER POINTER

- Choose lasers labeled as Class 2.
- Choose a laser pointer that stays on only when you apply pressure with your fingers. That way you can never leave the beam on by accident.
- Never look directly into the laser beam or point it at another person.
- Never aim a laser pointer at surfaces that reflect light, such as mirrors or mirrored surfaces.
- Never leave a laser pointer where a child might find it.