

Three decades at the cutting edge

Speedglas veteran Stefan Henriksson is continuously on the lookout for new solutions that improve welder safety. When he started working with the innovator of Speedglas auto-darkening technology in 1982, he was the company's fifth employee.

"We were working out of the innovator's house on the first auto-darkening welding filters, and we only produced two models," he says. Initially, the technology was greeted with scepticism. Henriksson, now Global Product Manager at the 3M Welding Centre of Excellence, recalls: "Welders asked us, 'Will it really get dark fast enough to protect my eyes?' and 'Is it fragile?'"

It took a while to get sales going." Fast-forward three decades and hundreds of thousands of welders all over the world rely on their Speedglas welding helmets. "It has been an amazing journey," Henriksson says.

"It is very satisfying to travel around the world visiting workshops and talking to welders," Henriksson says. "And then bringing that input back to the laboratory and seeing how the product can be improved." Henriksson says manual welding is unlikely to disappear any time soon and that there is a need to attract and train a new generation of skilled craftsmen.

One way of doing this is for welding supervisors to review the working environment to make sure they attract young talent. Henriksson says 3M is there to help. "It is our mission to provide welders with the best equipment in terms of their safety, comfort and long-term health."



Speedglas milestones

- 1981 – The first auto-darkening filter is launched.
- 1987 – A welding helmet with respiratory protection lets welders inhale fresh air even in a cloud of fumes.
- 1996 – The 3M™ Speedglas™ Welding Helmet 9000 raises the bar in ergonomics and usability, winning several design awards.
- 2008 – The 3M™ Speedglas™ Welding Helmet 9100 provides new levels of protection, comfort and reliability.

