

How to Take Care of Your Work Boots

Work 'n More Care Guide | Updated 2025 | worknmore.com

A good pair of work boots is one of the most important investments a working person makes. The difference between a boot that lasts two years and one that lasts five often comes down to how it's cared for — not how much it cost in the first place.

This guide covers everything you need to keep your work boots performing and protected: cleaning by boot type, conditioning and waterproofing, drying, insole replacement, laces, toe guards, and how to know when it's finally time to replace a pair. We've also included the care products and accessories carried at Work 'n More so you know what to look for when you come in.

Work 'n More carries boot care products, insoles, replacement laces, toe guards, and boot dryers at all four Washington locations. If you're not sure what your boot needs, bring it in — our associates can take a look and point you in the right direction.

Cleaning Your Work Boots

Mud, salt, chemicals, and job site grime break down leather, degrade stitching, and shorten boot life faster than almost anything else. Regular cleaning — even a quick wipe-down — is the single most impactful thing you can do to extend the life of your boots.

How often to clean

After every shift in wet or muddy conditions. Weekly if you're working in dry environments. Salt exposure (winter roads, coastal work) should be cleaned off immediately — salt crystals draw moisture out of leather and cause it to crack from the inside out.

Basic cleaning process

Let mud and dirt dry completely before brushing — attempting to clean wet mud pushes it deeper into the leather grain. Once dry, knock off loose debris and use a stiff brush to remove what remains. For deeper cleaning, use Grangers Footwear Cleaner, which is safe for leather, synthetics, and Gore-Tex or eVent lined boots. Work the cleaner in with a brush, wipe clean with a damp cloth, and allow to air dry.

What not to use

Avoid dish soap, laundry detergent, and household cleaners — they strip the natural oils from leather and degrade waterproofing membranes. Never machine-wash work boots. The agitation and heat damage the adhesive bonds between the upper, midsole, and outsole, and the heat cycle destroys cushioning compounds.

Grangers Footwear Care Kit — available at Work 'n More — includes a footwear cleaner, footwear repel spray, leather conditioner, and cleaning brush in one kit. It covers the full cleaning and waterproofing process for leather and synthetic boots and is safe for Gore-Tex and eVent linings. Shop at worknmore.com or in any location.

Conditioning and Waterproofing by Boot Type

Different boot materials need different care. Using the wrong product on the wrong boot can cause permanent discoloration, clog waterproofing membranes, or leave leather unprotected. Here's how to match the care routine to what you have.

Boot Type	Cleaning	Conditioning	Waterproofing
Full-grain leather	Brush off dry. Damp cloth or Grangers Footwear Cleaner for mud and grime.	Mink oil or Grangers Leather Conditioner every 4–6 weeks or when leather looks dry.	Grangers Waterproofing Wax or Repel Spray after conditioning. Wax gives a harder, longer-lasting barrier.
Nubuck / suede leather	Dry brush only when dry. Grangers Footwear Cleaner for stains — work gently.	Grangers Leather Conditioner — use sparingly. Avoid oil-based conditioners, which darken nubuck permanently.	Grangers Footwear Repel Spray. Re-apply frequently — nubuck loses water repellency faster than smooth leather.
Synthetic / nylon upper	Rinse with water. Grangers Footwear Cleaner for heavier soiling. Soft brush for textured panels.	Not required — synthetic uppers don't dry out like leather.	Grangers Footwear Repel Spray. Safe for synthetic materials and Gore-Tex / eVent membranes.
Waterproof membrane (Gore-Tex, eVent)	Same as upper material. Rinse membrane-friendly cleaner thoroughly — residue reduces breathability.	Condition the upper material per its type. Do not apply conditioner inside the boot.	Use a breathable waterproofing treatment such as Grangers Footwear Repel. Avoid wax-based treatments on lined boots — they clog the membrane.

How often to condition and waterproof

Leather boots should be conditioned every 4–6 weeks under normal use, or any time the leather looks or feels dry. Conditioning before waterproofing is important — conditioner keeps the leather supple and allows the waterproofing treatment to bond properly. A dried-out boot won't hold a waterproofing treatment as long as a well-conditioned one.

Waterproofing should be reapplied whenever water stops beading on the surface. On new boots, apply before the first wear — factory waterproofing is minimal and not intended to last. After heavy rain or extended wet use, let the boots dry fully before reapplying.

Grangers waterproofing options

Grangers Footwear Repel Spray is a spray-on DWR (durable water repellent) treatment suitable for all boot types including membrane-lined boots. Apply to clean, damp leather or synthetic uppers and allow to dry. For smooth leather boots that take heavy punishment, Grangers Waterproofing Wax provides a more durable barrier — worked into the leather by hand and buffed in. The wax is not suitable for membrane-lined boots as it can reduce breathability.

Mink oil is a traditional leather conditioner that works well on full-grain leather work boots. It softens and moisturizes the leather effectively, but note that it darkens leather permanently and is not suitable for nubuck or suede. If you want to preserve the color and texture of your leather, use a clear conditioner like Grangers Leather Conditioner instead.

Drying Your Boots Properly

How you dry your boots matters as much as how you clean them. Improper drying — especially with direct heat — is one of the most common causes of premature boot failure.

What not to do

Never place work boots directly on a heat source — radiators, forced-air vents, campfire edges, or in a hot vehicle in direct sun. High heat dries out leather faster than it can absorb moisture, causing cracking and stiffening. It also softens and deforms the adhesive bonds between the sole layers and distorts the shape of the toe box and heel counter.

Air drying

Remove the insoles and loosen the laces fully to open up the boot for airflow. Place in a well-ventilated area at room temperature. Stuffing the boot loosely with newspaper helps absorb moisture from the inside — replace the newspaper after a few hours if the boots are very wet. Allow to dry completely before wearing again.

Boot dryers

A boot dryer is the most effective tool for drying work boots thoroughly without heat damage. Work 'n More carries boot dryers that circulate warm — not hot — air through the boot from the inside, drying the lining, insole, and upper evenly. For workers who wear boots in wet conditions regularly, a boot dryer pays for itself quickly in extended boot life and reduced foot odor.

Dry boots before conditioning and waterproofing — products applied to wet leather don't penetrate or bond correctly.

Boot dryers are available at all Work 'n More locations. If you're rotating between two pairs of boots — which significantly extends the life of both — a dryer makes the rotation practical even in heavy-use situations. Shop at worknmore.com.

Insoles and Footbeds: When and What to Replace

The insole is the part of your boot that takes the most direct punishment — compressing under your full body weight with every step. Most factory insoles are designed to a price point, not for long-term fatigue prevention. Replacing them with a purpose-built insole is one of the best upgrades you can make to a work boot, and it's significantly cheaper than buying a new pair.

When to replace your insoles

Replace insoles when they feel flat or have lost their cushioning, when the arch support is no longer noticeable, when the insole is visibly compressed or cracked, or when odor persists despite

cleaning. In most boots used daily, insoles should be replaced every 6–12 months regardless of visible wear — the cushioning compounds compress gradually and you may not notice how much support you've lost until you step into a fresh pair.

Choosing the right insole

Insole Type	Best For	Products at Work 'n More
Anti-fatigue / cushion	Workers on feet 8+ hours on hard floors — concrete, asphalt, warehouse environments.	<i>Timberland PRO Anti-Fatigue Technology Insole, Superfeet Work Cushion</i>
Arch support	Workers with flat arches, plantar fasciitis, or chronic foot fatigue that cushioning alone doesn't resolve.	<i>Superfeet Green Trim-to-Fit, Superfeet Copper Moldable, Superfeet Blue Trim-to-Fit</i>
Thermal / insulated	Cold-weather outdoor work, unheated warehouses, loading docks in winter.	<i>Vallation Thermal Insoles, Danner Thermal Insoles</i>
Puncture-resistant	Construction, demolition, roofing — environments with nail boards and sharp debris underfoot. Required where ASTM F2413 P rating applies.	<i>Puncture-resistant insoles — ask an associate for current inventory</i>
Women's-specific	Women's footwear with narrower heel cup and different arch profile than men's insoles.	<i>Superfeet Work Cushion (Women's)</i>

Sizing insoles

Most aftermarket insoles are trim-to-fit — they come oversized and are cut to match your boot size using the size markings on the insole itself. Remove the factory insole and use it as a template if the trim lines don't match your boot's shape exactly. Some insoles are sized directly (S, M, L, or by shoe size range) and don't require trimming.

Work 'n More stocks insoles from Superfeet, Timberland PRO, Danner, Georgia Boot and Sof Sole at all four locations. If you're not sure which insole is right for your boot and job, bring your boots in — our associates can help you match the insole to your foot and your work. Shop at worknmore.com.

Replacement Laces

Laces are a consumable part of a work boot — they fray, break, and wear out faster than the boot itself. Replacing them when worn is cheap and keeps the boot performing correctly. A broken or overly frayed lace is also a trip hazard on an active job site.

Choosing the right lace

Match lace length to your boot height — 45" for most 6" boots, 54" for 8" boots, longer for boots with more eyelets. Flat laces stay tied better than round laces in most work boot applications. Waxed flat laces provide extra grip and resist fraying longer than unwaxed options. Kevlar-reinforced laces are available for heavy-duty applications where standard laces wear through quickly.

Match the lace color to your boot if appearance matters for your workplace — most work boots take black or brown. Work 'n More carries replacement laces in common lengths and colors.

Longer lasting laces

Many laces won't last through the harsh conditions of a work site. Look for laces designed to last longer from Danner, Rhino Laces and LaceTech. They are more cut-resistant and hold up better in abrasive environments.

How to lace for fit

If your boot fits well in length but feels loose in the heel, try the heel lock lacing technique: use the top two eyelets to create a loop on each side before tying, which locks the heel into the back of the boot and eliminates heel slip. This is worth knowing for anyone whose boots feel loose in the heel despite being the right size.

Toe Guards

The toe box of a work boot takes more abrasion than any other part — kicking materials into position, dragging against concrete edges, and general job site contact wears through the leather or synthetic upper at the toe faster than anywhere else. A toe guard protects this area and significantly extends boot life.

KG Boot Toe Guard

KG Boot Toe Guards are pre-formed rubber shields that bond adhesively to the toe of the boot. They cover the full toe profile, protecting the leather or synthetic upper from the abrasion and impact that wears through boots fastest. Apply before the first wear for maximum protection, or at the first sign of wear beginning at the toe. KG Boot guards fit most standard work boot toe profiles and are available at Work 'n More locations.

Tuff Toe

Tuff Toe is a brush-on liquid rubber compound that bonds directly to the toe of the boot, forming a tough, flexible protective coating as it cures. Unlike a pre-formed shield, Tuff Toe conforms precisely to the shape of the toe box — making it a good option for boots with non-standard toe profiles or for getting a tight, seamless fit on a boot that's already been worn in. It's also useful for repairing early-stage toe wear before the damage goes deeper. Available at Work 'n More locations.

How to apply

For KG Boot guards: clean the toe area thoroughly and allow to dry completely. Peel the adhesive backing and press the guard firmly against the toe, smoothing from the center outward to eliminate air pockets. Allow to cure for 24 hours before heavy use. Check the edges periodically and replace when the guard begins to lift or wear through. For Tuff Toe: clean and dry the toe area. Apply with the included brush in thin, even coats — two to three coats provides the best protection. Allow each coat to dry before applying the next. Full cure takes 24 hours. Reapply when the coating wears through.

Rotating Your Boots

If you can invest in two pairs of work boots and rotate between them, do it. Allowing a boot to fully dry and decompress overnight before its next wear extends the life of both pairs significantly — studies on athletic footwear consistently show that midsole materials last two to three times longer when given 24 hours to recover between wears. The same principle applies to work boot cushioning compounds.

Rotation also gives you time to clean and dry properly between shifts, apply conditioning and waterproofing when needed, and catch developing problems — a loose outsole, a cracking upper, a worn heel — before they become a job site hazard.

When to Replace Your Work Boots

Even well-maintained boots eventually reach the end of their service life. Knowing when to replace rather than repair saves money and — more importantly — keeps you safe on the job. Here's what to look for.

Component	Signs It's Time to Replace	Why It Matters
Midsole / cushioning	Boot feels flat or hard underfoot. Foot and leg fatigue increases noticeably. Midsole visibly compressed or creased on the sides.	A compressed midsole no longer absorbs impact. You're essentially walking on hard foam — the protective and fatigue-prevention function is gone.
Outsole / traction	Lug pattern worn smooth. Heel worn down unevenly. Slipping on surfaces that weren't a problem before.	Traction is a safety function, not just a comfort one. Worn outssoles on job sites and loading docks are a slip-and-fall hazard.
Upper / leather or synthetic	Deep cracks in leather that reach through to the inner lining. Delamination where upper separates from midsole. Mesh torn or separated.	A compromised upper lets in water, reduces structural support, and in some cases exposes the foot to direct hazard contact.
Safety toe (steel or composite)	Visible dent, crack, or deformation in the toe box. Any impact severe enough that you felt it through the boot.	A deformed safety toe has absorbed its rated impact — it will not perform to spec on a second impact. Replace immediately.
Waterproofing	Water soaking through rather than beading. Inner lining is wet after exposure. If your feet are cold in wet weather, it may mean water is between the leather and the inner lining.	Often fixable with re-waterproofing treatment before replacing the boot. If the membrane is physically damaged, replacement is the only option.
Insole / footbed	Insole visibly compressed, misshapen, or cracked. Odor that washing doesn't resolve. Arch support no longer felt.	Insoles typically wear out before the boot does. Replacing them extends boot life and restores the comfort and support you felt when the boots were new.

Shop Boot Care Products and Accessories at Work 'n More

Work 'n More carries everything covered in this guide — Grangers boot care kits, waterproofing sprays and wax, mink oil, insoles from Superfeet and Timberland PRO, boot dryers, replacement laces, and toe guards including KG Boot and Tuff Toe — at all four Washington locations.

If you're not sure what your boots need, bring them in. Our associates know the products and the brands and can point you toward the right care routine for what you're wearing.

Shop boot care products and accessories: [worknmore.com](https://www.worknmore.com)

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