

## **PPE - Personal Protective Equipment**

There are over 75 OSHA Standards that address the need and use for Personal Protective Equipment (PPS). While PPE use can prevent injuries and illnesses, engineering controls should be the primary methods used to eliminate or minimize hazard exposure in the workplace. When controls are not practical or applicable, personal protective equipment can be used to reduce or eliminate personnel exposure to hazards. Personal protective equipment (PPE) must be provided, used, and maintained when it has been determined that its use is required and that such use will lessen the likelihood of occupational injuries and/or illnesses.

**Hazards** in the workplace are a fact of life. No matter what you do, there's the need for personal protective equipment on many of the jobs you perform. Health hazards, eye hazards, noise and chemicals. whether or not you use personal protective equipment is really up to you. If you choose not to, your attitude may be the biggest hazard of all. Personal Protective equipment is one of the best ways to protect your own health and safety.

**Ear plugs** or ear muffs can go a long way to avoid hearing loss. Adjust your muffs so they're comfortable and don't squeeze your ears. Disposable ear plugs must be clean and fitted properly. Never insert dirty ear plugs or use dirty hands when putting the plugs in your ears.

**Safety glasses** provide eye protection from flying chips, debris and other eye hazards. Goggles protect your eyes from chemical splashes and face shields are a safeguard when worn over other protective eyewear, such as safety glasses.

**Gloves** protect your hands from chemicals, rough or sharp parts and a wide range of skin protection. Keep in mind that there are literally hundreds of different types of gloves, each designed for a specific purpose, so select the proper glove for the job.

**Respirators** protect you against a wide variety of dust, fumes, gases, vapors and many other health hazards. One of the most misused respirators in industry is the dust mask. It's designed only for certain types of dust, but many people believe it's good for any type of hazard. A dust mask cannot be used for spray painting or other types of vapors. Each specific hazard must have the proper respirator that provides protection for that hazard. Proper fitting of respiratory equipment and the wearing of equipment as it was intended is equally important.

**Hard Hats** protect your head from low hanging or falling objects. Wear hard hats as they were intended to be worn and never make modifications to your hat, such as drilling air holes in the sides. Each hat is engineered for impacts and if you modify the hat, you could damage the hat to such a degree where the hat will not afford the designed protection. Bump caps are made of lesser quality plastic and are not engineered for falling objects or impacts. Bump caps are used in areas where there are bump hazards and not falling objects. Many food processing facilities use bump caps solely for the purpose of containing hair and not for protection from impacts of falling objects.

**Boots and safety shoes** are good personal protective equipment. Even if your job doesn't require steel toed safety shoes, leather topped shoes can provide a degree of protection from chemical splashes, petroleum products and small cuts, bruises and abrasions. Your shoes should be in good condition and the soles of the shoes should be slip resistant. Keep your footwear in good condition and always clean off your shoes before climbing ladders or getting into vehicles. Grease or slippery shoes can create accidents.

**Chemical clothing** and encapsulating suits are used when there are vapor, gas and other airborne hazards. When you're engaged in this type of work, more training is necessary, to make sure you understand what protection is offered and how to specifically use, handle and store the equipment. When we talk about personal protective equipment, the basic equipment just described comes to mind, but in a work environment, you must consider many other safety devices that could be lumped together with personal protective equipment.

### **What is personal protective equipment?**

Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as "PPE", is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. These injuries and illnesses may result from contact with chemical, radiological, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other workplace hazards. Personal protective equipment may include items such as gloves, safety glasses and shoes, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls, vests and full body suits.

What can be done to ensure proper use of personal protective equipment?

All personal protective equipment should be safely designed and constructed, and should be maintained in a clean and reliable fashion. It should fit comfortably, encouraging worker use. If the personal protective equipment does not fit properly, it can make the difference between being safely covered or dangerously exposed. When engineering, work practice, and administrative controls are not feasible or do not provide sufficient protection, employers must provide personal protective equipment to their workers and ensure its proper use. Employers are also required to train each worker required to use personal protective equipment to know:

- When it is necessary
- What kind is necessary
- How to properly put it on, adjust, wear and take it off
- The limitations of the equipment

- Proper care, maintenance, useful life, and disposal of the equipment

If PPE is to be used, a PPE program should be implemented. This program should address the hazards present; the selection, maintenance, and use of PPE; the training of employees; and monitoring of the program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.

## **Training**

Make sure you know how to use and maintain the PPE you're required to wear.

Whether you're wearing hardhats or fully encapsulating suits, you need to understand how your PPE protects you and when it won't. Training includes the type of PPE necessary and when it must be worn, proper care of your PPE, how to put on, adjust, wear, and remove PPE; when to replace worn-out PPE, and; how to dispose of contaminated PPE.

OSHA requires companies to assess the workplace to determine if hazards are present or likely to be present that require you to PPE. You, in turn, must follow the safety rules and procedures in place and wear all appropriate PPE. In a hazardous environment or operation, the right application and use of PPE will reduce injuries or exposure in the workplace. Follow these industrial safety tips for PPE use.

## **Hazards**

Hazards exist in every workplace: sharp edges, falling objects, flying sparks, chemicals, noise and a host of other potentially dangerous situations. Personal protective equipment, or PPE, is equipment you wear to reduce your exposure to a variety of

hazards. PPE includes such items as gloves, foot and eye protection, protective hearing devices (earplugs/muffs), hard hats, respirators and full body suits.

## **Hazard Control**

Controlling a hazard at its source is the best protection method. Using engineering or work practice controls to manage or eliminate hazards is always recommended. PPE is considered the last resort of protection.

The requirement for PPE: Making sure the best possible protection in the workplace is available is a cooperative effort of both the company<sup>1</sup> and you. This will help in establishing and maintaining a safe and healthful work environment.

Both employers and employees must understand and do the following:

To understand the types of PPE you may need at work, you should know the basics of how to conduct a hazard assessment of the workplace. This will determine the PPE you'll need for your job. Once you know this, you'll need to be trained in the proper use and care of your PPE.

Always notify your supervisor if your PPE needs to be repaired or replaced.

## **PPE Requirements**

All PPE used on the job should meet all ANSI requirements, and will be kept clean and reliable. Fit and comfort will be considered when selecting PPE for the workplace. If your PPE fits well and is comfortable to wear, you'll be more likely to use it. Always let your supervisor know if there are problems with the fit or comfort of your PPE. PPE that

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doesn't fit properly can make the difference between being safely covered or dangerously exposed. If you need to wear different types of PPE together, make sure they're compatible.

It's your responsibility to

- Wear the PPE issued
- Maintain, clean, and store your PPE properly

Always wear your required PPE to protect you from workplace hazards. Companies usually require you to show that you understand how to wear and use PPE properly before being allowed to perform work requiring the use of the PPE.