The correct use of PPE to prevent health related issues such as occupational deafness, is a pet subject of mine. The importance of looking after occupational deafness, is a pet subject of mine. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 was not designed to cripple industry with unnecessary rules and regulations. It was designed to save us all from injury, from work-related disorders such as sight or hearing impairment, and to make sure that we work in safe environments. It is of course up to us to cooperate at all times. In fairness, the Act was also introduced to save the Government money – e.g. lost tax revenue from people who become unfit for work due to work related accidents and injuries. For example, take deafness, from which I suffer. This is not something particularly great to put up with on a daily basis, nor easily reversible. And yet the temptation is always there not to bother with PPE – earmuffs are uncomfortable, but, hey, if you stuff in a pair of Sony Walkman buds you can't hear the machine (quite as much). Decibel ratings are clearly displayed on all machines these days. In doubt – put on the ear-defenders!!

I knew a greenkeeper in our area who did just that – popped out of the office to help a colleague hitch on a trailer – and the trailer dropped off its hitch onto this guy’s foot. Likewise, always put safety boots on – even just to pop out into the yard. If you don’t – use those ear-defenders!! Likewise, always put safety boots on – even just to pop out into the yard. I knew a greenkeeper in our area who did just that – popped out of the office to help a colleague hitch on a trailer – and the trailer dropped off its hitch onto this guy’s foot. Likewise, always put safety boots on – even just to pop out into the yard. If you don’t – use those ear-defenders!!

Mind that greenkeeper – he may be deaf

any PPE at all – e.g. no dust mask, no anti-vibration gloves, and no ear defenders. “Well,” I asked, “is there a problem with your ears? He finished, “So, hey, that drill works well – went through the wall like butter – exactly what is the dba output?” “The what? Oh no-one’s ever asked before it says somewhere – here it is – 105. “Right…” I said carefully “…and what about the vibrations, they must be enough to take most of the enamel off your teeth. I should think – what’s the hand-arm exposure limit?” “Pardon? Oh – I don’t know, but we don’t use it for long so it’s alright.” I skimmed over the lack of dust mask and the unsupported ladder – (although I’d had to look away when he was dangling over my conservatory roof!)

As for the dust – there’s yet another major occupational hazard. I inhaled some of the dust just watching my cavity-waivers from a safe distance – heaven knows what this guy’s respiratory system was going through. People are still dying from exposure to asbestos dust 40 years previously (allegedly over 3000 people a year) – who knows what the dust from my 1920’s house bricks contained, but I bet it wasn’t anything good for lungs! Dust should be in your COSHH assessment – always use a throwaway mask.

To cut a long story short – don’t be tempted.

If you haven’t got the right gear (PPE) don’t do the job, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem. Sounds obvious, but above everything else our health has to be our primary concern.

If our health fails our quality of life fails also and that’s permanent – so what’s with the temptation to take the short-cuts?

As a footnote, on the feedback form I let the cavity wall company know exactly what I thought about their service – excellent and that’s permanent – so what’s with the temptation to take the short-cuts?

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Paul Worster
Past Chairman Paul Worster speaks from the heart when it comes to the correct use of PPE

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