

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

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Personal protective equipment (PPE) is defined as something intended to be worn or held by a person which protects them from risks to their H&S at work. A suitable risk assessment will identify if PPE is required and what type. Typical examples are head, foot and eye protection where impact or dust and chemical splashes have been identified as hazards. Less well recognised items can be adverse weather clothing.

PPE should be the solution to protect people, not the first line of defence. The reason for this is PPE only protects those who are wearing it and not others in the same work area. The hierarchy of protecting people's safety of, elimination, reduction and control measures ensures everyone's safety. Only where the risk from a hazard cannot be fully controlled by other means will make the wearing of PPE an acceptable solution in protecting people's safety.

Where issued, PPE should be: Free of charge to employees; Suitable to control the risks identified e.g. eye protection to protect against chemical splashes will not be suitable for angle grinder use; Adjustable to fit the wearer; Not expose the wearer to greater risks by wearing it e.g. heavy waterproof clothing may cause people engaged in manual work to over-heat. In these cases a change in the method of work or more specialised PPE will be required; Compatible with other items of PPE that are being worn.

One vital part in the selection of PPE often ignored is the comfort of the user. Having identified that PPE is required it is then vital that it is worn. Bulky, uncomfortable equipment is less likely to be worn than

something that fits well, looks like everyday wear and is comfortable to wear e.g. where the requirement for impact resistance is low a modern pair of safety glasses be more readily worn than goggles. Where possible the user should be involved in the selection of PPE as it will increase the likelihood of it being used.



Having issued PPE to employees the employer has a duty to: Ensure replacements are available if required; Provide adequate storage to keep it free from damage and clean when not in use; Provide training on why PPE is necessary, how it is to be fitted and used and how to recognise any defects in the equipment; Inform employees on how to report defective or lost PPE and how replacements can be obtained; Ensure the equipment is worn when necessary, even for one off jobs that will last a short time. Failure to ensure the wearing of PPE can result in prosecution of the employer and a reduction in injury compensation to the employee involved in the event of an incident.

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