



Personal Protective Equipment Policy and Guidance

INTRODUCTION

Where risk assessments identify that there are risks that cannot be eliminated or effectively controlled the Council will supply Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support other controls to reduce the risk.

What is Personal Protective Equipment?

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is defined in the Regulations as “all equipment (including clothing for or in protection against weather)” which is intended to be worn or held by a person at work and which protects him against one or more risks to his health or safety, e.g. safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses.

Waterproof, weatherproof or insulated clothing is subject to the Regulations only if its use is necessary to protect employees against adverse climatic conditions that would otherwise adversely affect their health and safety.

A few types of equipment are not covered by the Regulations, mainly ordinary working clothes and uniforms that do not specifically protect against risks to health and safety, and protective equipment worn by professional sports people during competition.

Provision and Use of Personal Protective Equipment

The main requirement of PPE is that personal protective equipment should be supplied and used at work whenever there are risks to health and safety that cannot be adequately controlled in other ways. It should always be considered as a last resort and used only where other precautions cannot adequately reduce the risk of injury.

Where PPE is the only effective means of controlling risks to injury or ill health then the Council is obliged to ensure that it is available for use at work free of charge.

Assessing Suitable Personal Protective Equipment

To allow the right type of PPE to be chosen the different hazards in the workplace need to be considered carefully (see Risk Assessment). This will enable an assessment to be made of which types of PPE are suitable to protect against the hazards and for the job to be carried out.

The following factors should be considered when assessing the suitability of PPE:-

- Is it appropriate for the risks involved and the conditions at the place where exposure to risk may occur? For example, eye protection design for providing protection against chemicals will not offer adequate face protection for someone using an angle grinder to cut steel or stone.
- Does it prevent or adequately control the risks involved without increasing the overall level of risk?
- Can it be adjusted to fit the wearer correctly?
- Has the state of health of those who will be wearing it been taken into account?

- What are the needs of the job and demands it places on the wearer? For example the length of time the PPE needs to be worn, the physical effort required to do the job, and the requirements for visibility and communication.
- If more than one item of PPE is being worn, are they compatible? For example, does the use of a particular type of respirator make it difficult to get eye protection to fit properly?

Training

When PPE is needed and provided there is a requirement to instruct, train and supervise its use. Because PPE is a last resort after other methods of protection have been considered, it is important that users wear it all the time they are exposed to the risk. Safety signs should be used as useful reminders to wear PPE.

Maintenance

Equipment needs to be well looked after and be properly accommodated when not in use, for example stored in a dry clean cupboard or in the case of smaller items such as eye protection in a box or case.

New Personal Protective Equipment

From 1st July 1995 new PPE needed to be “CE” marked in accordance with the requirements of the amended Personal Protective Equipment (EC) Directive Regulations 1992. The CE mark signifies that the PPE satisfies certain basic safety requirements and in most cases will have been tested and certified by an independent body.

Existing non-CE marked PPE can continue to be used after 30th June 1995 provided it still offers adequate protection.

Other Regulations

The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 do not apply where PPE is provided under six sets of existing Regulations. These Regulations already require the use of some types of PPE to protect against certain risks, for example the Noise at Work Regulations require the use of hearing protection when necessary. The six sets of Regulations are:-

- The Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980
- The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985
- The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987
- The COSHH Regulations 1988
- The Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989
- The Noise at Work Regulations 1989

Sites for Consideration

Eyes Hazards: chemical or metal splash, dust, projectiles, gas vapour, radiation.

Choices: spectacles, goggles, face screens.

Head and neck Hazards: impact from falling or flying objects, risk of bumping head, hair entanglement.

Choices: helmets, bump caps, hats, souwesters, cape hoods, skull caps.

Breathing Hazards: dust, vapour, gas, oxygen deficient atmospheres.

Choices: disposable filtering face piece or respirator, half/full face respirator, air-fed helmets, breathing apparatus.

Protecting the body Hazards: temperature extremes, adverse weather, chemical or metal splash, spray from pressure leaks or spray guns, impact or penetration, contaminated dust, excessive wear or entanglement of own clothing.

Choices: conventional or disposable overalls, boiler suits, donkey jackets, speciality protective clothing, e.g. high visibility clothing.

Hands and arms *Hazards:* abrasion, temperature extremes, cuts and punctures, impact, chemicals, electric shock, skin infection, disease or contamination, vibration.

Choices: gloves, gauntlets, mitts, wrists, cuffs, armllets.

Feet and legs *Hazards:* wet, electrostatic build-up, slipping, cuts and punctures, falling objects, metal and chemical splash, abrasion.

Choices: safety boots and shoes with steel toecaps (and steel midsoles), gaiters, leggings, spats.

When should Personal Protective Clothing be Worn

The need for the provision of personal protective clothing will be determined as a result of risk assessment. Normally, if a risk can be avoided by other methods, for example engineering controls, then that course of action should in general be taken. If it is not, check that:

- PPE is provided
- It offers adequate protection for its intended use.
- Those using it are adequately trained in its safe use
- It is properly maintained and defects reported
- It is returned to its proper accommodation after use.

Further information and guidance is available from the Health and Safety Team.