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Employees must wear PPE for the entire period of exposure to hazards. Do not put your PPE away just because the work lasts for only “a few minutes”. If any defect on PPE is found, report it to the employer immediately and replace it.

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In order to cope with any emergency need, replacement PPE should always be readily available.

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- Is sufficient PPE provided for each type of hazard?
- Is the intended use of PPE, can it provide adequate and suitable protection for the workers?
- Has the user received adequate instruction and training regarding safe use of PPE?
- Has the PPE properly maintained?
- Has the PPE cleaned and properly stored after use?

Hearing

High levels of noise

Hearing protective equipment (including ear muffs and ear plugs)

Foot and leg

Wet floors and slips; cuts, bumps and punctures; falling objects; splashing of chemicals or molten metals; abrasion

Safety boots or safety shoes, water-proof boots with steel toe caps, steel soles and slip-proof characteristics

Fall protection

Injury or death caused by falling from height

Safety harnesses (to be used with lifelines or attached to anchorage points)

Responsibilities

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Selection of suitable PPE

To select suitable PPE, it is necessary to examine different hazards in the workplace carefully. For the same type of PPE, the degree of protection varies between different models. Therefore, risk assessments have to be carried out to determine which type of PPE is the most suitable one. The selected PPE must conform to internationally recognized standards or the standards stipulated in the legislation for the purpose of ensuring its effectiveness. You can consult safety professionals, PPE suppliers or manufacturers as to which suitable PPE.

Factors to consider in selecting suitable PPE

- Can the PPE provide effective protection against the hazards and whether it is suitable for use in the work process? For example, eye protectors designed for metal or rock cutting cannot provide adequate protection for gas welding or flame cutting workers.
- Can the PPE prevent or reduce the hazards without creating unsafe working conditions? Take, for example, the improper use of half-face masks or cartridge respirators in asbestos removal.
- Can the PPE be adjusted to fit the user's body properly?
- Has consideration been given to the health of the user?
- What are the physical strength requirements of the work? What is the load of PPE imposed on the user? For example, duration of use of the PPE, physical strength required for the work and requirements on communication and visibility.
- If one or more types of PPE have to be worn, are they compatible? For instance, will the use of a certain type of respirator prevent the user from wearing an eye protector correctly?

To provide effective protection against the hazards of a workplace, the PPE should be used only where these measures cannot control the hazards effectively.

The main purpose of PPE is to protect the body of the user from contact with the hazards, but not to eliminate the hazards. Since the effectiveness of PPE can be easily affected (e.g., by improper wearing), PPE should only be regarded as the last resort in the hierarchy of hazard control measures. It is a supplement to other measures, but not a substitute for them.

Area of protection | Hazards | Types of PPE for selection
---|---|---
Eye | Splashing of chemicals or acids; dust; projectiles; gas and vapour; radiation | Safety glasses; goggles; face shields
Head | Impact from falling or flying objects; risk of head bumping in a cramped working environment | Safety helmet; bump cap
Respiratory system | Dust; fibres; aspiration gas and fumes; oxygen deficiency | Disposable cartridge respirators; full face, half face; air-fed respirators; self contained respirators
Torso | Extreme temperature; inclement weather; splashing of chemicals or molten metals; radiation; injury caused by falling objects; hazardous dust; fibre, dark environment or personal clothing entangled | General purpose protective clothing; disposable overalls; specialized protective clothing such as cold resistant clothing; chemical or radiation protective clothing; high visibility clothing and personal clothing appurtenances
Arm and hand | Abrasion, extreme temperature; cuts and punctures; contact with chemicals; electric shock; skin infection | Rubber gloves; steel mesh gloves; latex gloves; wrist and arm protective devices

What is Personal Protective Equipment?

Personal protective equipment (PPE) refers to “all equipment (including clothing for inclement weather) which is intended to be worn or otherwise used by a person at work to which protects the person against one or more hazards to his/her safety or health.” It includes safety helmets, gloves, eye protectors, respiratory protective equipment, ear protectors, high visibility clothing, safety shoes, safety harnesses, etc.

Provision and Use of PPE

When there is a hazard to personal safety or health at work, it is most important to eliminate the hazard by adopting safety measures like engineering controls, improved work processes and administrative controls. PPE should be used only when these measures cannot control the hazards effectively.

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When it is necessary to use PPE to safeguard the safety and health of workers, the employer must provide them with suitable PPE and ensure that they use it properly. The employers should also use PPE during their work. Improper use or temporary removal of PPE at work will reduce the protection provided.

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