

Protective Clothing and Equipment



Choosing and using equipment

Protective clothing and equipment should only be used as a last resort; it is far better to eliminate the hazard than to rely upon workers wearing protective devices. However, where it is to be used the following issues need to be considered.

- 1) Ensure the level and type of protection you choose is appropriate to the risk. Take advice from suppliers, specialist consultants and your health and safety inspector.
- 2) Choose good quality, reliable products made to a recognised or approved standard. All new protective equipment must carry a 'CE' mark to show that it complies with European Safety Standards.
- 3) Choose equipment suitable for the workers who are to wear it. The same sort of equipment may not be appropriate for everybody. Involve workers in the choice of equipment and ask their opinion on the equipment in use.
- 4) Ensure any new protective equipment is compatible with other clothing and, equipment that must be worn.
- 5) Make sure workers know why protective clothing and equipment must be worn, and instruct and train them in its use.
- 6) Take measures to ensure that protective equipment is worn, even short periods of non-use can be important to the overall level of protection. Carry out spot checks and use posters or signs to remind staff of the need to wear the appropriate equipment. Remember that visitors and supervisors may also need protection.
- 7) Equipment must be well maintained and any defects reported immediately. Some types of equipment, particularly respiratory protection, must be examined and tested formally at regular intervals. Ensure adequate replacements are readily available at all times. Provide safe and hygienic facilities for workers to store their protective equipment when not in use.

The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 and Guidance booklet lays down all the requirements for employers with regard to the provision, use and maintenance of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the workplace. The guidance also contains some advice on the selection of PPE in the workplace and considers the different types available and situations where protection is required.

Types of equipment

For Eyes - Spectacles, goggles and face screens. Most equipment is marked with a British Standard number indicating the level and type of protection offered; it is

important that the correct type is chosen. When providing eye protection you need to think about the following:

- Impact Protection
- Chemical protection
- Compatibility with other equipment such as head protection or ear defenders

For Head and Neck - Helmets, bump caps, hairnets, hats, caps, beard snoods, sou'westers, cape hoods and skullcaps.

For Hearing - Earplugs (pre-shaped), individually moulded or disposable and muffs. The level and type (frequency) of noise must be known before hearing protection can be selected.

For Hands and Arms - Gloves, gauntlets, mitts, wrist cuffs and armllets. There is a wide range of products so information on the exact nature of the hazard is needed prior to selection. Ensure hand protection does not create a further hazard by a reduction in dexterity or trapping risks with machinery. Barrier and skin conditioning creams can also prove useful.

For Feet and Legs - Safety boots and shoes (with steel toecaps and mid-sole), gaiters, leggings, spats and clogs. Consider slip hazards and the need for chemical-resistant, anti-static, electrically conductive or insulating soles.

For Respiratory System – Disposable masks, half or full-face respirators (cartridge or canister) powered respirators and breathing apparatus (fresh air or compressed air line or self-contained). The nature of the hazard (dust, gas etc.), its concentration, duration of use and oxygen level must all be known before you can make the correct selection.



For Full Body - Conventional or disposable overalls, boiler suits, warehouse coats, donkey jackets and aprons. Clothing can be insulating, non-flammable, anti-static, chemically impermeable, high visibility or chain mail.

References

HS(G)53 Respiratory protective equipment : a practical guide for users n

L25 Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992:

Guidance booklet.

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