

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The law requires the Council to consider the appropriate provision and use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

PPE is equipment that will protect the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as safety helmets and hard hats, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses.

Cycle helmets or crash helmets worn by employees on the roads are not covered by the Regulations. Motorcycle helmets are legally required under road traffic legislation.

What do the Regulations require?

PPE should be used as a last resort. Wherever there are risks to health and safety that cannot be adequately controlled in other ways, then the law requires that provided PPE is:

- properly assessed before use to make sure it is fit for purpose;
- maintained and stored properly;
- provided with instructions on how to use it safely;
- used correctly by employees.



Assessing suitable PPE

To make sure the right type of PPE is chosen consideration needs to be given to the different hazards in the workplace and identify the PPE that will provide adequate protection against them.

This may be different for each work activity and should include:

- Does the PPE protect the wearer from the risks and take account of the environmental conditions where the task is taking place?
For example eye protection designed to protect against chemicals may not offer adequate protection when using an angle grinder to cut steel or stone.
- Does the PPE increase the overall level of risk or add new risks, e.g. by making communication more difficult?
- Can it be adjusted to fit the wearer correctly?
- What are the needs of the job and the 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 or the requirements for visibility and communication.
- If someone wears more than one item of PPE, are they compatible? For example does using a respirator make it difficult to fit eye protection properly?

Selection and use

When selecting PPE it is important to ensure that:

- good quality products which are CE marked in accordance with the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002 are chosen;
- equipment that suits the wearer (consider the size, fit and weight etc) is chosen;
- users are involved in choosing the PPE options
- PPE users are shown how to use it;
- PPE users are made aware of why it is needed, when to use it and what its limitations are.

The hazards and types of PPE

PPE can be used to provide protection in a number of ways, this includes:

Eyes – e.g. protection from chemical or metal splash, dust, projectiles, gas and vapour, radiation by provision of safety spectacles, goggles, face-shields, visors.



Head – e.g. protection from impact from falling or flying objects, risk of head bumping, hair entanglement by the provision of a range of helmets, hard hats and bump caps.

Breathing – e.g. protection from dust, vapour, gas, oxygen-deficient atmospheres by providing disposable filtering face-piece or respirator, half- or full-face respirators, airfed helmets or breathing apparatus. Face fit testing may be required prior to the use of some respirators.

Protecting the body – e.g. protection from 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 by the provision of conventional or disposable overalls, boiler suits, specialist protective clothing, e.g. chain-mail aprons, high-visibility clothing.

Hands and arms – e.g. protection from abrasion, temperature extremes, cuts and punctures, impact, chemicals, electric shock, skin infection, disease or contamination by the provision of gloves, gauntlets, mitts, wrist-cuffs, armllets.

Feet and legs – e.g. protection from the wet, electrostatic build-up, slipping, cuts and punctures, falling objects, metal and chemical splash, abrasion by the provision of safety boots and shoes with protective toe caps and penetration-resistant mid-sole, gaiters, leggings, spats etc.

Training

It is not enough to simply give PPE out there is a need to provide some degree of information, instruction and training on its safe use, storage and maintenance.

Maintenance

Inspection and maintenance of the PPE is critical and, in the first instance, is very often the responsibility of the user. The users need to inspect PPE before use and consider the following:

- is the equipment well looked after and properly stored when it is not being used, e.g. in a dry, clean cupboard, or for smaller items in a box or case?;
- is the equipment being kept clean and in good repair?;
- is simple maintenance being undertaken by the user (in accordance with their training)? More intricate repairs should only be undertaken by specialists;
- make sure replacement parts match the original, e.g. respirator filters;
- users need to know who is responsible for maintenance and/or how to do it;
- users need to know how to make proper use of PPE and how to report any damage, fault or loss.

Make sure suitable replacement PPE is readily available. In some situations it may also be prudent to have a supply of disposable PPE, e.g. for visitors who need protective clothing. Replace items that have past their “use by dates”.

Legal Position on Charging for PPE

Where necessary PPE has been identified and is made available to an employee then the employer cannot ask for money from an employee for that PPE. On some occasions employees may pay towards the provision of a more aesthetically pleasing style or make as long as the level of protection required is not diluted, for example the provision of prescription safety glasses or safety boots.

Key points to remember

- ✓ Health and safety risks should be adequately controlled without using PPE.

If not, check that:

- ✓ Suitable and appropriate PPE is being provided;
- ✓ Necessary PPE is being provided free of charge;
- ✓ An assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the types of PPE being used are suitable to protect against the hazard(s) and the related work tasks;
- ✓ Steps have been taken to ensure necessary PPE fits employees well. (Good practice will involve the users in the selection/procurement process);
- ✓ Where more than one item of PPE is being worn then they are compatible with each other;
- ✓ All users are adequately trained in safe use, inspection and maintenance of their PPE together with the actions to be taken when it is lost or damaged;
- ✓ Clean and appropriate storage is provided for PPE;
- ✓ That the needs of the job and demands it places on the wearer been considered, for example, physical effort and the need to communicate.

- ✓ If respiratory protective equipment (RPE) is being used then face fit testing of each individual may be needed. Discuss this with your line manager.

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