



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is necessary in many working environments to protect us from numerous occupational hazards. It is important to note that although suitable PPE might be worn, it doesn't eliminate the hazard.

PPE needs to be properly selected, fitted, cleaned and maintained and its use closely monitored to make sure that it is effectively minimising the dangers posed by the hazard. If the PPE isn't effective it will provide little or no protection.

PPE is essential when it is not practical to eliminate or reduce the hazard using other methods. It can also be useful in providing protection in emergencies, clean ups or when carrying out maintenance procedures.

Some general examples of everyday PPE use are:

- Helmets – Worn to protect our head from falling objects
- Hats – To keep direct sunlight from our face and eyes
- Hoods – Provide protection from hazardous chemicals or fumes
- Ear muffs and ear plugs – Protect us from exposure to noise-induced hearing loss in noisy work environments
- Sunglasses – Reduce the effects of ultra violet radiation and glare
- Safety glasses – Protect our eyes from flying objects, dust, chemical splashes or flashes from welding equipment
- Gloves – Protect our hands from cuts and abrasions or from the effects of chemicals or water
- Respirators and masks – Limit our exposure to dangerous substances or airborne contaminants
- Safety boots and shoes – Provide protection for our feet from falling objects and/or chemicals

Personal protective clothing (as opposed to equipment) may be required for a range of different purposes:

- A uniform or overalls to protect our own clothing
- Jackets designed to keep out the cold or wet
- Overalls, shirts and trousers to protect our skin from chemicals, sprays or sunlight
- Aprons to prevent damage from chemical splashes or simply to keep us clean

Whatever the sort of equipment or clothing we use, for it to effectively reduce our risk of injury and disease it has to be the correct type for the particular job we are performing. A mask that is suitable for the protection from dust may not provide suitable protection when using hazardous chemicals. Or a type of glove may not be suitable to provide adequate protection for some types of chemicals.

Various Australian Standards specify the equipment and clothing that provide suitable protection for particular tasks. These standards are a useful guide for employers when choosing personal protective equipment.

The correct fitting of protective equipment and clothing is extremely important. An incorrect or poorly fitting item of PPE may expose the person to a similar risk of injury or disease than if they weren't wearing any at all. Suitable training in how to fit the equipment must be provided.

Equally important as the type and fit of the equipment is the maintenance and cleaning of it. Protective Equipment generally requires regular cleaning and maintenance. In some instances it may be inappropriate to launder protective clothing in the home. This is especially true when the clothing has been worn when removing asbestos or handling hazardous materials.





PPE that is shared with another person can increase the risk of infections. For this reason it is best to have personal equipment stored somewhere clean and dry and where only one person can use it.

Signs are often used in workplaces to indicate areas where personal protective equipment needs to be worn. Whether people work in that area or are just visiting, they need to be familiar with and comply with the signs.-

Questions:

1. Does wearing an item of PPE eliminate a hazard?

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2. Can you name three general examples of PPE in everyday use?

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3. What documents specify the correct types of PPE for particular types of work?

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4. Is the correct fitting of PPE important to protect safety?

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5. Should workers share PPE for example ear muffs?

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