

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Why PPE

Knowing the hazard potential for each job is very important if you, as a team member, expect to forge ahead and be productive.

If one member of the team is hurt, it reduces the ability to get the job done, increases costs, and causes needless human suffering.

One defensive tool we all have is personal protective equipment. Always anticipate the unexpected and protect yourself accordingly.

Just as a football player has a helmet, face guard, shoulder pads, hip pads, knee pads, and other protective equipment, we have similar devices. Hard hats for impact resistance, safety glasses of every kind imaginable to protect the eyes, prescription glasses made to comply with federal specifications, and plastic goggles and face shields all provide an extra margin of safety.

Each time we fail to use the proper equipment, the chance of suffering an injury increases.

Think about what you have to lose. Is it worth it? What about our future and our families future?

Safety manufacturers have provided us with just about every type of protective device imaginable. But, we still have injuries that could have been prevented if protective equipment had been worn.

Particularly devastating is the loss of sight. While prosthetic limbs work reasonable well, artificial eyes cannot restore sight.

We have to wear the equipment in order for it to protect us.

You can find PPE designed to protect:

- * Eyes – goggles / face shields, safety glasses,
- * Face – face shield / protective shields / barriers,
- * Head – hard hat / bump hat,
- * Ears – earplugs / earmuffs,
- * Feet – safety shoes / boots
- * Hands and arms – gloves / sleeve guards, and
- * Protective clothing – vests / safety suits / safety jackets.
- * Body – Shields / barriers / restraints
- * Airways / lungs – Respiratory devices.

Some of the PPE that is available includes:

- Hard hats for impact resistance.
- Safety glasses with side-shields for eye protection from flying particles.
- Splash goggles to protect eyes from liquid splashes.
- Earplugs or earmuffs to protect hearing in high noise areas.

- Gloves to protect hands. Be sure the gloves you are using will protect you from the chemicals you are handling.
- Air filtering respirators to protect lungs.
- Supplied air respirators and SCBA to protect in areas of highly concentrated chemical vapors.
- Protective clothing, ranging from the basic uniform up to totally encapsulating suits.
- Safety shoes to protect feet.

Hearing protection

Wearing earplugs and earmuffs can protect our hearing. Take time to use them in high noise areas (more than 85 decibels).

Hand protection

Gloves can protect your hands. There are several types of gloves (rubber, vinyl, cloth, leather) to fit any type of work.

It is important to remember that any one type of glove does not protect against all chemicals. You must use the appropriate glove for the chemical that you are handling.

Respirator protection

Respirators protect our lungs against noxious and toxic gases, fumes, and dusts. We have to know what we are working with in order to select the proper respirator. It's doubly important that we know how to use the respirator.

We must know a respirator's limitations, and it must fit properly and be worn correctly in order for it to protect us.

In situations where chemical concentrations in the air are above the usefulness of an air-filtering respirator, we have air-supplied respirators and hoods, or self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). These air-supplying respirators offer greater protection than air filtering respirators.

Skin protection

Protective clothing comes with different levels of protection. It starts with a basic work uniform which provides our skin with some abrasion protection and warmth.

It continues with tyvek suits that give us some chemical protection, all the way up to total encapsulating suits which provide a totally enclosed environment.

As with respirator selection, protective clothing must be chosen with the same care for the type of environment and chemicals that will be encountered.

Foot protection

It is sometimes difficult to tell a safety shoe from a street shoe. The real difference is, of course, the one and one half-ounce steel cap that will withstand 2,500 pounds of crush resistance along with the metatarsal guard, which gives your feet the added protection they need.