

Safety Bugle

Today's Topic: General PPE



Introduction

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is designed to protect employees from serious workplace injuries or illnesses resulting from contact with chemical, physical, mechanical, electrical or other workplace hazards. In addition to the commonly known PPE such as hard hats, safety glasses and steel toed shoes, PPE includes a variety of devices and garments such as goggles, coveralls, gloves, vests, earplugs and respirators.



When facing a hazard in the workplace, PPE should be considered as a last resort. Engineering solutions such as ventilation or enclosing a system should always be considered first. If that is not practical, then administrative controls should be applied. Administrative controls include work practices which reduce the risk of exposure. PPE is only to be used when the first two options do not provide a suitable solution to reduce the hazard.

Types of PPE

The types of PPE commonly used at facilities include:

- Safety glasses.
- Chemical gloves.
- Leather work gloves.
- Safety goggles.
- Chemical apron.
- Hearing protection.
- Hard hat.



Hazard Assessment

Prior to using any type of PPE, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires the employer to assess the workplace to determine if hazards are present which absolutely require PPE. If such hazards are present, PPE must be properly selected, fitted and employees must be trained to use it appropriately.

Inspection

Prior to wearing any type of PPE, it is important for you to inspect it to make sure it will protect you adequately. If the PPE is defective or in poor condition, it should be marked "Do Not Use" and discarded. Watch for these items as you examine your PPE:

- Rips or tears in the fabric.
- Worn or frayed straps.
- Dirty or stained fabric.
- Separated seams.

Remember, there are two types of PPE: disposable (chemical gloves and hearing protection) and reusable (like leather gloves and fall protection harnesses.) Be sure that you only use disposable PPE once. One time use is all it is designed and tested for!

Storage

In order for reusable PPE to be effective and in good condition, it must be stored correctly. Follow these rules:

- Store PPE in a reclosable bag or the original packaging.
- Place PPE out of direct sunlight.
- Do not stack other equipment or material on top of PPE.

Disposal

Once PPE has been used it should be placed in a sealed bag and disposed of appropriately. If PPE has been used in the cleanup of blood or hazardous materials, it must be disposed of in accordance with local regulations.



Need More Information?

For additional information on PPE:

- OSHA PPE Fact Sheet
http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/toc_fact.html