



Worksite: _____ Instructor: _____ Date/Time: _____

Topic C129: PPE Types

Introduction: What is PPE? PPE means “personal protective equipment.” It refers to what a worker wears for protection against a hazard. The original PPE was body armor: protective clothing that deflected arrows, spears, lances, and swords. Modern PPE has evolved to protect workers against a variety of workplace hazards. Workers use personal protective equipment in activities ranging from manufacturing to office work. PPE describes a seemingly endless list of products intended to protect workers against an equally long list of hazards.

Despite its widespread use, personal protective equipment is frequently misused. PPE offers appropriate protection for some tasks and no protection for others. Properly used, PPE protects workers against a hazard (or hazards) but it does not eliminate a hazard. The following are the most common categories and types of PPE available:

- **Eye and face protection:** Safety glasses, goggles, face shields, welding helmets
- **Head protection:** Protective helmets such as hardhats
- **Hearing protection:** Single-use earplugs, molded ear plugs, or earmuffs
- **Respiratory protection:** Air-purifying respirators, atmosphere-supplying respirators, combination respirators, and dust masks
- **Foot and leg protection:** Metatarsal guards, toe guards, foot and shin guards, steel-toed boots, safety shoes/boots, and leggings
- **Hand and arm:** Durable work gloves, fabric/coated fabric protection gloves, chemical/liquid resistant gloves, and insulating rubber gloves
- **Torso protection:** Chemical protective clothing (CPC), Flame/heat resistant clothing, cooling vests, surgical gowns, aprons, and full body suits
- **Fall protection:** Full-body harnesses and body belts (only when used as part of a positioning system that limits falls to two feet)
- **Musculoskeletal:** Back belts, joint braces, and other devices designed to prevent overexertion-type injuries
- **Buoyant protection:** Personal flotation devices (PFDs) such as life jackets and vests

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It is the employer's responsibility to survey the workplace and conduct a hazard assessment to identify hazards and determine if employees need personal protective equipment. Hazard assessments should be re-evaluated whenever there are changes in the workplace.

The traditional approach to controlling hazards advocates PPE only when engineering controls and administrative controls are not feasible. In theory, engineering controls are the most effective defense against hazards and administrative controls are the next choice. But there are environments, processes, operations, and tasks for which PPE may be appropriate. These include mobile jobs, frequently changing production processes, and temporary jobs. When engineering controls are too expensive to implement, and administrative controls are not possible, PPE may be the only reasonable control method. However, work environments change and PPE appropriate in the workplace now may not be appropriate in the future.

Training: To know how to use PPE, workers must be trained. The type and scope of training depends on the type of PPE workers use. Whether they are wearing hardhats or fully encapsulating suits, workers must know how PPE protects them and when it will not protect them. Training includes covering what type of PPE is necessary and when it must be worn; proper care, maintenance and useful life of PPE; how to put on, adjust, wear, and remove PPE; when to replace worn-out PPE, and; how to discard contaminated PPE.

Conclusion: OSHA standards require employers to assess the workplace to determine if hazards are present or likely to be present that necessitate the use of personal protective equipment. Employees must in turn follow the safety rules and procedures in place and wear all appropriate PPE. In a hazardous environment or operation, the correct application and use of PPE reduce the incidence of injuries or exposure in the workplace. Follow these safety tips for PPE use.

Employee Attendance: (Names or signatures of personnel who are attending this meeting)

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These guidelines do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.