

Personal Protective Equipment

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As an employer, you must perform a hazard assessment of your workplace to determine if present or possible hazards require the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE use helps protect employees from possible dangers, but other precautions, such as engineering controls and/or sound manufacturing practices, must first be utilized to eliminate the hazard.

When PPE is necessary, you must:

- Select, provide, and require the appropriate PPE for each affected employee.
- Instruct employees in the proper use of PPE.
- Communicate PPE selection decisions to each affected employee.
- Select and provide PPE that properly fits each affected employee.

Examples of required equipment to be provided by the employer include: wire mesh gloves; respirators; hard hats; safety glasses and goggles; specialty foot protection, such as metatarsal shoes and lineman's boots with built-in gaffs; face shields; rubber gloves; blankets; cover-ups and hot sticks; and other live-line tools.

In the past, there has been confusion concerning whether employers or employees must pay for the required PPE. OSHA has made it clear that failure of an employer to pay for PPE, not commonly used by the employee away from the job, is a violation. Examples of PPE that may be provided by employees include safety shoes and cold weather outerwear like what is worn by construction workers. However, the employer must pay for shoes or outerwear that cannot safely be worn off-site due to contamination by carcinogens and toxic or hazardous substances.

Hazard Assessment

To assess the need for PPE, a survey of the workplace must be conducted. The purpose of the survey is to identify the sources of hazards to employees. Injury and accident data (OSHA logs, first aid logs, and workers' compensation injuries) should also be reviewed to help identify problem areas. Consideration should be given to each hazard category and the potential source of the hazard.

Basic hazard categories include:

- Impact - head, eye, or foot
- Penetration - foot, hand, or body
- Compression (roll-over) - foot or body
- Chemical - splashes to eyes, face, or body, and exposures to hands and arms
- Heat - burns to skin or eyes
- Harmful dust - eye or lung damage
- Light (optical) radiation - eye or face burns

PPE Determination

- Identify the potential hazards, the type of available PPE, and what protection it provides.
- Compare the capabilities of various types of PPE with hazards associated with the environment.
- Select PPE that provides a level of protection greater than the minimum requirements.
- Select PPE that will properly fit each employee.

Employee Training

You must train your employees on how to properly use PPE. At a minimum, each employee must know:

- When and what PPE is necessary
- Which PPE has been selected for each process
- How to properly put on, wear, adjust, and take off PPE
- What the PPE limitations are
- When the PPE is defective and should no longer be used
- How to replace defective PPE
- How to care for, maintain, store, and dispose of PPE

Verify that each employee who is required to use PPE receives and understands the required training.

Employee Retraining

Employees must be retrained whenever:

- Workplace and type of PPE change, rendering the previous training obsolete.
- You observe inadequacies in an employee's knowledge or use of PPE.

Resources

OSHA 29 CFR 1910

Subpart I- Personal Protective Equipment, sections 1910.132 to 1910.140

OSHA 29 CFR 1926

Subpart E- Personal Protective and Life Saving Equipment, sections 1926.95 to 1926.107

Additional Resources

WCF Insurance Safety Department
(385) 351-8103

[Ask a Safety Consultant](#)

[osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov)

[cdc.gov/niosh](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh)

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