



## **Personal protective equipment**

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is clothing, equipment or substances designed to be worn by someone to protect them from risks of injury or illness.

PPE should only be considered as a control measure when exposure to a risk cannot be minimised in another way, or when used in conjunction with other control measures as a final barrier between the worker and the hazard. PPE does not control the hazard at the source.

This information should be read in conjunction with the *Risk Management Code of Practice 2007*. In particular, more information on PPE is provided in Supplement No. 3 – Control, Implement, Monitor and Review - of the code.

### What law applies

Legal obligations, legislation, code of practice

### What is personal protective equipment?

Examples and definition

### When should you use it?

Use with other control measures, risk control priorities

### Who pays?

When should an employer provide personal protective equipment (PPE)

### Selecting PPE

General principles to be used when selecting PPE for a particular job or task

### Using PPE

Manufacturers' instructions, instruction to workers, fit of PPE, signage

### Storing and maintaining PPE

How to store PPE, maintenance programs

### Personal protective equipment plan

Requirements for a PPE plan

## What law applies

In order to understand the workplace health and safety requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) and your obligations under the law you must consider and understand relevant legislation and codes of practice.

### ***General health and safety obligations***

To understand your obligations and safety requirements you must be familiar with the:

*Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* which imposes obligations on people at workplaces to ensure workplace health and safety. The *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* also helps you to meet your workplace health and safety obligations through:

- The *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008* which describes what must be done to prevent or control certain hazards which cause injury, illness or death
- codes of practice, which are designed to give practical advice about ways to manage exposure to common risks. In particular, the *Risk Management Code of Practice 2007* should be read in conjunction with information on PPE.

Every Queensland employer must have **workers' compensation** insurance. Most employers insure with WorkCover Queensland, while a small number of large organisations have their own insurance. This insurance coverage ensures that employees injured at work receive financial support.

### ***What you must do***

It is a requirement of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* that risks must be assessed and control measures then implemented and reviewed to prevent or minimise exposure to the risks.

If the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008* describes how to prevent or minimise a risk at your workplace you **must** do what the regulation says. If there is a code of practice that describes how to prevent or minimise a risk at your workplace you **must** do what the code says or adopt and follow another way that gives the same level of protection against the risk.

If there is no regulation or code of practice about a risk at your workplace you **must** choose an appropriate way to manage exposure to the risk. People must, where there is no regulation or code of practice about a risk, take reasonable precautions and exercise proper diligence against the risk.

See the *Risk Management Code of Practice 2007* for further information.

## ***Specific regulations for PPE***

More information on PPE is provided in *Supplement No. 3 - Control Implement, Monitor and Review of the Risk Management Code of Practice 2007*.

## What is personal protective equipment?

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is any clothing, equipment or substance designed to protect a person from risks of injury or illness.

PPE can include:

- hearing protective devices, such as ear muffs and ear plugs
- respirators
- eye and face protection, such as goggles
- safety helmets and sun hats
- gloves and safety boots
- clothing, such as high visibility vests or life jackets

## When should you use it?

It is a requirement of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* that risks must be assessed and control measures then implemented and reviewed to prevent or minimise exposure to the risks.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) and administrative controls are lowest on the hierarchy of control measures. PPE does not control the hazard at the source and should not be relied on as the main control measure unless it is a temporary or interim measure or when options higher on the list of controls have been exhausted. PPE can be used effectively in conjunction with other control measures to manage exposure to a risk.

The effectiveness of PPE as a control measure is limited as it can:

- be uncomfortable to wear
- make working difficult
- create other risks to a person's health and safety
- be expensive in the long term

## Who pays?

Employers must ensure workers have appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). However, who pays for it can be negotiated in the workplace.

Payment arrangements could include:

- the employer buys and pays for it
- the worker buys it and is fully or partially reimbursed
- the worker buys it and pays for it

In deciding who should provide PPE consider:

- the availability of equipment
- whether the equipment can generally be used outside work, such as sunglasses or boots

- the need for a personal fit
- the requirements in the relevant industrial award or enterprise agreement regarding provision of PPE.

## **Selecting PPE**

To ensure that the item of personal protective equipment (PPE) will provide the level of protection that is it designed to, PPE should:

- be appropriate for the type of work and give appropriate protection for the risk
- give adequate protection to the user
- not create additional health or safety risks
- be compatible with other PPE being used (e.g ear muffs with a hard hat)
- fit properly
- not interfere with any medical conditions of the user
- be easy to use
- be comfortable
- comply with relevant Australian Standards

Consult with workers when selecting PPE and consider a persons individual characteristic and style preference.

## **Using PPE**

Make sure that:

- personal protective equipment (PPE) is used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions
- the PPE fits correctly
- workers are instructed and trained in how to use it
- appropriate signs should be displayed to remind workers where PPE must be worn

Training should cover arrangements for the provision, correct use, storage and maintenance of PPE and should be done:

- when new workers start work
- when you get new PPE
- to refresh workers' memories from time to time

Remember to keep a record of any training.

## **Storing and maintaining PPE**

Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be stored in a clean and fully operational way. PPE needs to be checked regularly both during storage and use and should be easily accessible when needed.

PPE should be maintained to ensure its continued effectiveness. As part of a maintenance program, identify and record:

- maintenance duties and responsibilities
- storage procedures
- cleaning procedures
- checking procedures
- replacement criteria

Repair or discard damaged or defective PPE.

Refer to the relevant Australian Standards for more information on storage and maintenance requirements for specific items of PPE.

## **Personal protective equipment plan**

Where a risk assessment has identified that PPE is to be used as a control measure, a **personal protective equipment plan** should be developed. The PPE plan should identify and record:

- reasons for selecting each type of PPE
- medical data such as the results of individual hearing tests prior to and periodically during exposure to noise. This will help evaluate the effectiveness of PPE
- worker training in relation to PPE
- fitting, cleaning, storage and maintenance and replacement requirements

The plan should allow for periodic assessments to ensure the PPE remains effective