

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Information guide – Rural industry

13. Chemicals – personal protective equipment (PPE)

Chemicals enter the body through:

- skin contact and the inhalation of fumes, vapours and dusts, and
- accidental ingestion, e.g. taken in with food, or absorbed following hand to mouth transmission through actions, such as smoking or nail biting.

Buying and using the PPE is often not enough to ensure maximum health benefits. Equipment which is not properly fitted, maintained and cleaned can be hazardous.

Further information about PPE in the workplace is available from the *Risk Management Code of Practice 2007 Supplement 3: Control, implement, monitor and review*, which can be found on our website www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Selecting the correct protective clothing and equipment

- Is it suitable for the chemical and its concentration? Get advice from the MSDS.
- Does it fit the person properly? For respirators, does the wearer have facial hair?
- Is it comfortable and easily put on and removed?
- Are there sufficient resources and commitment to ensure equipment is maintained and in good working order?

Maintaining protective clothing and equipment

- Keep all items of protective clothing clean and in good working order. Wash hats, boots, gloves, overalls, aprons and visors or goggles at the end of each day or after

each spray operation, whichever comes first.

- Overalls should be washed in hot water separately from the household domestic wash. Wash all other items in warm water and soap, rinsing well.
- Check gloves carefully for tiny (pinpoint) holes. Fill gloves with water and squeeze, discard glove if holes are evident.
- Keep eye goggles clean, especially if they have a head band. The head band is often made of material that absorbs pesticides and is in contact with the forehead, one of the most absorptive areas of the body.
- Keep contaminated clothing and equipment in a box, not loose in your vehicle. A spare set of protective clothing should be kept in your vehicle.

Maintaining respirators

- After use, remove filters and set aside.
- Wash respirators in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. Store respirators in a sealed plastic bag or box away from direct sunlight and extreme temperatures.
- Wipe the outside surface of respirator filters with a damp cloth, but do not allow water to enter the filter.
- Clean and store filters in a sealed container or a plastic bag to maximise their shelf life.
- Periodically check the one-way valves on your respirator to make sure that they are still soft, pliable and functional.
- Check that the face piece of the respirator has not deteriorated. It should

be soft, comfortable and have a good face seal.

- Ensure that filters are changed and used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. They should be replaced when it becomes difficult to breathe through them.

Protective clothing or equipment is sometimes the only way you can protect your health and safety. Choose it carefully and keep it clean!

It is important to:

- Ensure that the correct PPE and respirators are available, correctly stored, clean and well maintained.
- Read labels on chemical containers and MSDSs.

More information

Further information is available from www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or by calling the WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915.

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