



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Purpose:

To remind all workers that PPE is the last line of defense against injury and must be selected, worn, and maintained properly to protect against workplace hazards.

1. Why PPE Matters

Every task has potential hazards—flying particles, falling objects, sharp edges, chemical splashes, heat, or noise. PPE doesn't eliminate these hazards, but it reduces the risk of injury when other controls can't fully protect you. OSHA requires employers to assess hazards and provide PPE when needed, and employees must use it correctly every time.

2. Types of PPE and When to Use Them

- **Head Protection:** Hard hats protect against impact and electrical hazards. Inspect before use; never paint or drill holes in them.
- **Eye and Face Protection:** Safety glasses, goggles, or face shields protect from flying debris, splashes, or sparks. Always wear the correct type for the hazard.
- **Hand Protection:** Use gloves designed for your task—cut-resistant, chemical-resistant, or insulated for heat or cold.
- **Foot Protection:** Steel-toe or composite boots protect against crush injuries, punctures, and slips.
- **Hearing Protection:** Earplugs or earmuffs reduce exposure to loud noise above 85 dBA.
- **Respiratory Protection:** Dust masks or respirators protect against inhalation hazards (must be approved and fit-tested if required).
- **High-Visibility Clothing:** Makes workers visible to equipment operators and drivers, especially in low-light areas.

3. Proper Use and Maintenance

- Inspect PPE before every use. Look for cracks, frays, missing parts, or wear.
- Replace damaged or defective PPE immediately.
- Keep PPE clean and stored properly when not in use.
- Never share PPE that is designed for personal fit (like earplugs or respirators).
- Report any missing or damaged PPE to your supervisor.

4. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Wearing the wrong PPE for the job.
- Removing PPE before the task is complete.
- Failing to replace worn or contaminated PPE.
- Assuming PPE will make up for unsafe behavior.

5. Everyone's Responsibility

Safety is shared. Supervisors must ensure PPE is available and properly maintained, and workers must wear it consistently and report issues immediately. Using PPE is not optional, it's a condition of working safely.

Key Takeaway

PPE only works if you do. The moment you skip wearing it or wear it improperly, you take unnecessary risks. Protect yourself, protect your team, and make PPE a part of your daily routine.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of PPE you use daily?
2. How can improper fit or condition reduce PPE effectiveness?
3. Who should you contact if your PPE is damaged or missing?
4. What's one thing you can do today to ensure your PPE is always ready to use?