

PPE: Your Last Line of Defense

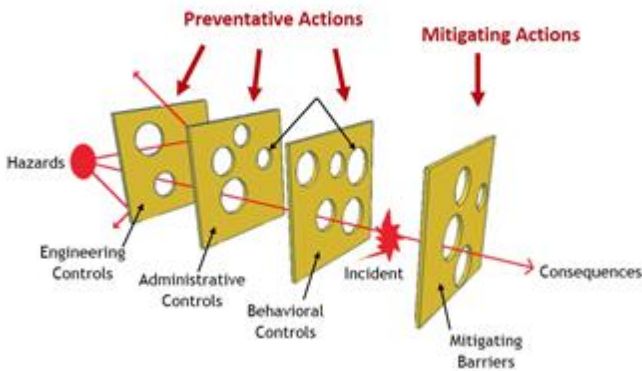
When engineering controls, administrative controls, and work practices have all been used, personal protective equipment (PPE) is your last defense against workplace hazards.

PPE can save the day! It's another normal day at work. That is, until you're walking across the job and a bolt falls on your head. Were you wearing a hard hat? If so, you're in good shape. If you weren't, you could be in serious trouble. The same applies no matter what job you have: PPE can prevent injuries, illnesses and even death. If you're not wearing it, it's not doing you any good.

Get PPE to Serve You Best

Getting the most out of your PPE isn't just a matter of putting it on. At the end of the day, the amount of attention you put into choosing and caring for your PPE is the amount of protection it'll provide. Here's how to get the most out of your gear:

1. Take proper care of your PPE. The general rule of thumb: Follow the manufacturer's guidelines to the letter. And always inspect your gear for damage before and after you wear it.
2. Wear the right gear for the job. Workers have died from mistakes as simple as wearing the wrong gloves for the job. Whenever you're getting ready, make sure you're donning the right PPE for the task at hand.
3. Make sure it fits - and is comfortable. If it doesn't fit, don't wear it. Talk to your manager about getting the article in your size. You should also put in a request if the PPE isn't comfortable, as it could be doing more harm than good in the long run.
4. Know how to put it on and adjust it. If you're not wearing an article of PPE properly, it's essentially useless. In fact, it could even cause additional damage if an incident occurs. Your employer is required to train you on proper PPE use. If you're unsure about something, ask.



PPE doesn't guarantee you protection from harm, but it certainly decreases the risk of injury.

Previous studies by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) found that in 84% of head injuries, the victims weren't wearing hard hats.

When it came to facial injuries, 99% of victims weren't wearing face protection.

The BLS also found that 77% of workers who suffered foot injuries weren't wearing protective footwear.

Here are some common questions - and answers - about the basics on PPE.

Q: When should you have PPE?

A: You should have and use PPE if there are hazards present that can injure or impair you through absorption, inhalation, or physical contact.

Q: Who's responsible for PPE?

A: In short: your employer. When hazards are present, your employer should provide you with appropriate PPE. If PPE is broken or worn, your employer is required to replace it - except when an employee has lost or intentionally damaged it. And if your employer allows you to buy your own PPE, they are responsible for reimbursing you for it. Your employer must also ensure that your PPE provides adequate protection and receives proper maintenance.

Q: What doesn't count as PPE?

A: Everyday articles of clothing, jackets for cold weather or rain, regular shoes, ordinary sunglasses may protect you from the elements, but they don't count as PPE.

Keep PPE in Mind – It Will Save Your Behind.