

# Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

## Selecting the Right Personal Protective Equipment By Edgar Boord

Maintaining a safe and healthy environment should be a priority in every workplace. Employers implement various efforts and practices to enhance safety in hopes of achieving this goal. Personal protective equipment, or PPE, is an excellent final step toward protecting individuals from a multitude of hazards that can be encountered in the workplace. From heat/burn-resistant gloves in the kitchen, to safety glasses while operating a table saw, each piece of protective equipment has its own function.

This section of *Risk Manager* will explore the various workplace hazards, exposure considerations, and types of PPE. In order to better understand what type of PPE is needed, the hazards present and parts of the body at risk should first be identified. An excellent resource for sample checklists, and other criteria for PPE selection, can be found on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's website:

[https://www.osha.gov/dte/library/ppe\\_assessment/pp\\_e\\_assessment.html](https://www.osha.gov/dte/library/ppe_assessment/pp_e_assessment.html).

This article will list the items that are included in the selection process, as well as a few other considerations. Here is a list of typical hazards that may be encountered in various workplace settings, just to name a few:

- Falling/flying objects
- Cuts/abrasions
- Flying debris/particles
- Chemical contact/exposure (i.e., burns, inhalation, irritation)

- Intense light (i.e., lasers, welding, etc.)
- Exposure to blood borne pathogens
- Extreme temperature contact/exposure
- Noise exposure
- Electrical
- Pinch points (i.e., moving parts/machinery)
- Asbestos, mold and other nonchemical inhalation hazards
- Other miscellaneous hazards that pose risk to an individual

The next step is to identify which parts of the body may be exposed to a hazard or at risk of an injury. Generally, this can be broken down into the following parts of the body and types of exposure:

- Eyes/Face
- Head
- Torso
- Arms
- Hands
- Legs/Pelvic Area
- Feet
- Whole Body
- Hearing

Then, consider the level of a specific hazard and other certain considerations that may come into play. In regards to the level of hazard, this could be the voltage of an electrical application being serviced, the temperature of the material being handled, or what type of hazardous properties a chemical being handled may have (i.e., corrosive vs.

toxic). In addition, it is important to keep in mind other aspects that may require certain types of PPE. If an employee must work outdoors near vehicular traffic, especially if at night, then high-visibility/reflective clothing should be worn. To accommodate for varying levels and types of hazard, most types of PPE conform to or meet standards set by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Gloves and hearing protection are some of the exceptions to ANSI standards. This aspect of PPE selection may require some research, but should not be overlooked, especially when protecting against hazards such as electricity, chemicals or flying debris.

The last major consideration when selecting PPE is to make sure it fits properly and is comfortable to wear. An individual may be less likely to wear their PPE if it is uncomfortable or does not fit properly. That is why this should be just as much a part of the selection process. Furthermore, employees should be trained in the proper use and care of their equipment to avoid an unnecessary injury due to improper use.

It is imperative to be proactive about implementing proper PPE, rather than waiting until a severe incident has a chance to occur. This can be done by either creating or adopting an effective hazard assessment for use at school. Assessments should be done for all tasks and job duties that have the potential to expose an employee to a hazardous environment. Remember, everyone wants to go home in the same condition as when they came into work. That is why it is essential to make sure that you, as well as co-workers and/or employees, are doing your best to protect against the hazards in the workplace.

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For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or [sorr@cmregent.com](mailto:sorr@cmregent.com).