

Types of PPE Available

Managers need to be aware that there are a variety of different types of PPE available which provides protection against a number of different risks. Each type of protection will also have various designs and features available which should all be considered as part of the implementation of effective PPE provision.

Managers need to be aware of the tasks being undertaken by their colleagues and what control measures (including PPE) are required.

Hearing Protection

There are three main types of hearing protection:

- Earmuffs/defenders, which completely cover the ear.
- Earplugs, which are inserted into the ear canal.
- Semi-inserts (also called canal-caps), which cover the entrance to the ear canal.



Head Protection

There are three widely used types of head protection:

- Industrial safety helmets (hard hats), which are designed to protect against materials falling from height and swinging objects.
- Industrial scalp protectors (bump caps), which are designed to protect from knocking against stationary objects.
- Caps/hair nets, which protect against entanglement.



Tasks where head protection may be required include; construction, building repair, work in excavations and tunnels, work with bolt driving tools, driving motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles, etc.

Please note. Turban wearing Sikhs are exempt from the requirement to wear hard hats on construction sites by virtue of the Employment Act 1989.

Eye Protection

There are several types of eye protection available:

- Safety spectacles. These are similar to regular glasses but have a tougher lens. They can include side shields for additional protection.
- Eye shields. A frame-less one piece moulded lens, often worn over normal prescription glasses.
- Safety goggles. These are made with flexible plastic frames and an elastic headband.
- Face shields. Heavier and bulkier than other type of eye protector. Face shields protect the face, but do not fully enclose the eyes so do not protect against dusts, mists or gases.



Tasks where eye protection may be required include; handling hazardous substances where there is a risk of splashing, work with power driven tools where materials are likely to be propelled, welding operations, work with lasers, using any gas or vapour under pressure.

Foot Protection

There are a number of types of safety footwear:

- Safety boots or shoes. Normally with steel toe-caps. Can also have other safety features (e.g. steel mid-soles, slip resistant soles, insulation against heat and cold).
- Wellington boots, which can be supplied with steel toe-caps.
- Anti-static and conductive footwear. Designed to protect against the build up of static electricity.



Tasks where foot protection may be normally required include; construction, demolition, building repair, manual handling where there is a risk of heavy objects falling on the feet, work in extremely hot or cold environments, work with chemicals and forestry.

Where there is a risk of slipping that cannot be avoided or controlled by other measures, attention must be given to the slip resistance of soles and replacement before the tread pattern is overly worn.

Hand and Arm Protection

Hand and arm protection comes in a variety of forms, including:

- Gloves and gauntlets (leather, nitrile, plastic coated, chain mail etc.).
- Wrist cuffs and armlets, e.g. used in glass cutting and handling.
- Barrier cream may sometime be used, where gloves cannot practicably be used.

Tasks where hand and arm protection may be required include the manual handling of abrasive, sharp or pointed objects. Work with vibrating equipment such as pneumatic drills and chainsaws, construction and outdoor work, work with chemicals and other hazardous substances (e.g. bodily fluids) and work with hot or cold materials.

Body Protection

Types of body protection include:

Overalls, aprons and coveralls (Protection against hazardous substances).

- Clothing for cold, heat & bad weather
- Clothing to protect against machinery (chainsaws)
- High visibility clothing (jackets, vests)
- Harnesses
- Back supports
- Life jackets



Tasks where additional body protection may be required include; work with hazardous substances, work next to the highway or other areas with moving vehicles (e.g. construction sites), outdoor work, forestry and grounds maintenance work.

Respiratory Equipment

Work with harmful dusts, fumes, vapours can require respiratory protective equipment. There are two main types of respiratory protective equipment:

- Respirators that filter contaminated air or clean it as it is breathed in.
- Respirators that supply clean air from an independent source.



See 'Assessing and Choosing PPE' for further information relating to fit testing.

Tasks where respiratory protection may be required include; welding, work with harmful substances, work in areas where large amounts of nuisance dust is present, work that creates dust (e.g. disc cutters).