

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guidance

Introduction

The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (as amended) sets out duties to employers to ensure that PPE is:

- Supplied and used at work wherever there are risks to health & safety that cannot be adequately controlled in other ways;
- Properly assessed before use to ensure it is suitable;
- Maintained and stored properly;
- Provided with instructions on how to use it safely;
- Used correctly by employees.

PPE is defined in the Regulations as “all equipment (including clothing affording protection against the weather) which is intended to be worn or held by a person at work and which protects him against one or more risks to his health or safety”, for example helmets, gloves, eye protection, safety footwear and high-visibility clothing. PPE does not include ordinary working clothes not designed to provide for the health or safety of staff. Portable devices, such as personal gas detectors or badges to detect radiation are not deemed PPE.

Other legislation such as Control of Substances Hazardous to Health 2002 (COSHH) or Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 contains specific information/requirements relating to PPE, for example Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) may be identified following a COSHH assessment. If RPE is identified following a COSHH assessment, contact should be made with your Health & Safety Department and/or Occupational Health Service for assistance and advice on selection, training, face-fit testing and maintenance (if required).

Department Managers should make arrangements to:

- Avoid the need for PPE whenever they can, using only when no other precautions are suitable
- Identify the circumstances and the hazards for which PPE is required
- Select PPE to fit users and protect them adequately
- Inform staff on when, where and how to use PPE
- Monitor and check that PPE is used appropriately, keeping records of any issues, maintenance (if required) and training
- Review periodically how well it protects against the hazard
- Ensure adequate stocks of PPE are available

Employees should:

- Use PPE when it has been identified as a control measure
- Ensure PPE fits properly and is comfortable
- Report any defects or problems with PPE via Datix and to their Manager

Points to consider:

- The requirement for PPE must be justified by a specific risk assessment relating to a particular hazard and defined circumstances;
- PPE must ALWAYS be a last resort- only used when all other controls introduced do not remove the risk to staff;
- PPE must provide adequate protection from the hazard;
- PPE must fit all users;
- If more than one item of PPE is used, these should be compatible;
- If PPE requires maintenance, ensure an identified staff member or group are responsible. Specialist training or equipment may be required;
- Users should be informed and reminded of why PPE is required, and how to use it appropriately