For Your Own Protection



Some people won’t wear personal protective equipment (PPE) unless they absolutely have to. But the fact is nobody wants to be injured or killed

That’s why employers conduct hazard assessments to determine what PPE is required and when.

Many people think PPE is automatically required by regulatory agencies such as OSHA (the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration). That’s not the case. What regulatory agencies do require is a hazard assessment. If the assessment identifies risks that can only be dealt with through PPE, then PPE is required. It’s as simple as that.

PPE is just one solution used by industry to address safety concerns, reduce employee exposure to hazards and make the workplace safer for all. It is generally used after other solutions have been considered and ruled out as unfeasible or ineffective. These other solutions can include engineering controls, training and new operating procedures.

Employers know that most employees would prefer safety solutions other than PPE. They understand that hardhats can make a hot workplace seem even hotter and that safety eyewear can fog up. They also know that safety must come first – before comfort, style or any other consideration.

Here are examples of some of the things industry considers when deciding when and if workers will be required to use personal protective equipment. Common types of PPE include eye protection, hardhats, hearing protection and safety boots.

Eye and face protection are generally required if workers are exposed to:

- Flying particles
- Liquid chemicals
- Acids or caustics
- Chemical gases or vapors
- Potentially harmful light radiation

Head protection is mandatory for anyone working near or around:

- Falling objects

- Cranes
- Overhead equipment
- Employees working above them

Foot protection is mandatory if:

- Falling or rolling objects are nearby
- The soles of the workers’ shoes could be pierced
- Workers’ feet are exposed to electrical hazards

Workers must wear gloves if:

- Harmful substances are present
- Chemical or thermal burns could occur
- Temperatures are extreme
- Cuts, lacerations or abrasions could occur

Hearing protection is required if noise levels:

- Are above 85 decibels
- Make talking difficult

If your employer requires you to wear personal protective equipment, you can be sure it is for your own good. Remember to use your PPE properly and in all instances. It is designed to protect you from injury.