Selection and use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Schools Safety Guide

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1. Introduction

Schools have duties concerning the provision and use of personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE is equipment that will protect the user against health or safety risks for work including site maintenance, Science, Design & Technology, and off-site activities. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. It also includes respiratory protective equipment (RPE). Even where engineering controls and safe systems of work have been applied, some hazards might remain. These include injuries to:

- the lungs, e.g. from breathing in contaminated air
- the head and feet, e.g. from falling materials
- the eyes, e.g. from flying particles or splashes of corrosive liquids
- the skin, e.g. from contact with corrosive materials
- the body, e.g. from extremes of heat or cold

PPE is needed in these cases to protect against the risk.

2. What you must do

Only use PPE as a last resort. If PPE is still needed after implementing other controls (and there will be circumstances when it is, e.g. safety glasses to protect against particle or liquid splashes), you must provide this free of charge. You must choose the equipment carefully (see selection details below) ensuring employees and students are trained to use it properly and know how to detect and report any faults with the equipment.

3. Selection and use

You should ask yourself the following questions as part of the risk assessment process for the task:

- Who is exposed and to what?
- How long are they exposed for?
- How much are they exposed to?

When selecting and using PPE: Choose products which are CE marked in accordance with the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations – suppliers can advise you. Choose equipment that suits the user – consider the size, fit and weight of the PPE. If the users help choose it, they will be more likely to use it. If more than one item of PPE is worn at the same time, make sure they are compatible/can be used together, Instruct and train people how to use it, e.g. train people to remove gloves without contaminating their skin. Tell them why it is needed, when to use it and what its limitations are

4. Other advice on PPE

- Never allow exemptions from wearing PPE for tasks that 'only take a few minutes'
- Check with your supplier on what PPE is appropriate – explain the task to them
- If in doubt, seek further advice from a specialist adviser such as the British Safety Federation Industry (BSIF)

5. Maintenance

PPE must be properly looked after and stored when not in use, e.g. in a dry, clean cupboard. If it is reusable it must be cleaned and kept in good condition.

Think about:

- keeping replacement PPE available
- using the right replacement parts which match the original, e.g. respirator filters
- who is responsible for maintenance and how it is to be done
- having a supply of appropriate disposable suits which are useful for dirty jobs where laundry costs are high, e.g. for visitors who need protective clothing

Staff must make proper use of PPE and report its loss or destruction or any fault in it.

- Check regularly that PPE is used. If it isn't, find out why not
- Safety signs can be a useful reminder that PPE should be worn
- Take note of any changes in equipment, materials and methods – you may need to update what you provide

6. Types of PPE you can use

Eyes

Chemical or metal splash, dust, projectiles, gas and vapour, radiation;

- Safety spectacles, goggles, face screens, face shields, visors

Make sure the eye protection chosen has the right combination of impact/dust/splash/molten metal eye protection for the task and fits the user properly

Head and neck

Impact from falling or flying objects, risk of head bumping, hair getting tangled in machinery, chemical drips or splash;

- Industrial safety helmets, bump caps, hair netting, beard netting.

Some safety helmets incorporate or can be fitted with specially-designed eye or hearing protection

- Don't forget neck protection, e.g. scarves for use during welding
- Replace head protection if it is damaged

Ears. Noise – a combination of sound level and duration of exposure, very high-level sounds are a hazard even with short duration

- Earplugs, earmuffs, semi-insert/canal caps

Provide the right hearing protectors for the type of work, and make sure workers know how to fit them. Choose protectors that reduce noise to an acceptable level, while allowing for safety and communication

Hands and arms. Temperature extremes, cuts and punctures, impact, chemicals, electric shock, radiation, biological agents and prolonged immersion in water:

- Gloves, gloves with a cuff, gauntlets and sleeving that covers part or all the arm

Avoid gloves when operating machines such as bench drills where the gloves might get caught .Some materials are quickly penetrated by chemicals – take care in selection, see HSE's skin at work website. (link here?)Barrier creams are unreliable and are no substitute for proper PPE

Wearing gloves for long periods can make the skin hot and sweaty, leading to skin problems. Using separate cotton inner gloves can help prevent this

Feet and legs. Wet, hot and cold conditions, electrostatic build-up, slipping, cuts and punctures, falling objects, heavy loads, metal and chemical splash:

- Safety boots and shoes with protective toecaps and penetration-resistant, mid-sole wellington boots other specific footwear.

Footwear can have a variety of sole patterns and materials to help prevent slips in different conditions, including oil - or chemical-resistant soles. It can also be anti-static. Appropriate footwear should be selected for the risks identified

Lungs. Oxygen-deficient atmospheres, dusts, gases and vapours

- **respiratory protective equipment (RPE)** Some respirators rely on filtering contaminants from workplace air. These include simple filtering facepieces and respirators and power-assisted respirators

Make sure it fits properly, e.g. for tight-fitting respirators (filtering facepieces, half and full masks). There are also types of breathing apparatus which give an independent

supply of breathable air, e.g. fresh-air hose, compressed airline and self-contained breathing apparatus

The right type of respirator filter must be used as each is effective for only a limited range of substances. Filters have only a limited life. Where there is a shortage of oxygen or any danger of losing consciousness due to exposure to high levels of harmful fumes, only use breathing apparatus – never use a filtering cartridge. You will need to use breathing apparatus in a confined space or if there is a risk of oxygen deficiency in the work area. If you are using respiratory protective equipment, look at HSE's publication Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide

Whole body. Heat, chemical or metal splash, contaminated dust, impact or penetration, excessive wear or entanglement of own clothing

- Conventional or disposable overalls, boiler suits, aprons,

The choice of materials includes flame-retardant, anti-static, chemically impermeable, and high-visibility. Don't forget other protection, like safety harnesses or life jackets

7. Further information

Please contact the health & safety unit if you require further information on PPE.

Further information on PPE also available on HSE's website: http://www.hse.gov.uk/pUbns/priced/l25.pdf

CLEAPS website: http://www.cleapss.org.uk/