

# Personal Protective Equipment FactSheet

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Courtesy of Centers for Disease Control

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can help protect workers from physical and health hazards or potential hazards while in the workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) require employers to check their workplace for hazards that may require the use of PPE. If hazards are found that cannot be controlled by engineering or administrative means, the employer must purchase suitable PPE and provide it to their workers. OSHA also requires that employers train workers in the use of PPE. Employees must demonstrate that they understand how to wear it, clean it and store it correctly. The standard for PPE is Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 1910, Subpart I.

Physical hazards can include:

- falling, moving or flying objects;
- moving equipment or parts;
- sharp objects; and
- temperature extremes.

Health hazards can include:

- chemical exposure;

- materials that can be inhaled or irritate the eyes or skin; and
- sound levels above an average of 85 decibels (dB) for eight hours.

The PPE used by a worker depends on the nature of the hazard.

1. Guard the eyes! Workers should always wear goggles, safety glasses, or face shields when working with or around chemicals, flying particles or any potentially infectious materials that could get into the eyes.
2. Protective gloves made of rubber; neoprene, nitrile, Kevlar or steel mesh can protect workers' hands from chemicals or from cuts. Workers should check with their supervisor before using gloves, because different types of gloves protect the hands from different chemical or physical hazards.
3. Protective footwear can keep feet safe from many hazards. Workers should wear shoes with metal toe protectors when handling heavy objects that could crush their feet and wear rubber or chemical-resistant boots with non-slip soles and heels when working near chemicals, water, or sewage.
4. Workers should wear a hardhat or helmet when they may encounter falling objects or bumping hazards.
5. Some jobs require a fully protective suit or apron to keep the worker's body protected from workplace hazards on the job.
6. Hearing protection such as earplugs or earmuffs must be able to reduce the sound level to below the 85 dB level previously mentioned.

Any worker, who is unsure about what PPE to use or doesn't have the appropriate PPE, should ask their supervisor. PPE required for specific hazardous chemicals will be specified on the Material Safety Data Sheets for those chemicals.

This fact sheet was published with information from Harvard University and the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation.

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