

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

### *Are you properly protected?*

Workers and employers can eliminate or control the prospect of occupational hazards. How? By knowing about possible hazards and by getting protection through use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* [Section 25(1)] requires employers to

- provide equipment, materials and protective devices
- make sure they are used as prescribed and
- maintain them in good condition.

This includes such items as hardhats, gloves, safety eyewear, safety footwear, fall arrest equipment, respirators, hearing protection, among many others.

### *Identify and Assess Hazards*

The first step is to identify and assess the hazards that come with a particular job or work process. You need to determine the

- source of the hazard
- nature of the hazard (physical, biological or chemical)
- duration of exposure to the hazard – long term versus short term
- exposure level of the hazard

### *Control Hazards*

Where a hazard is identified, try to control that hazard at the source or between the source and the worker. Before turning to PPE, consider the following

- eliminate the hazard through engineering controls at the source, this could mean having to modify or replace equipment
- substitute hazardous materials or substances with less or non-hazardous alternatives
- redesign the work process – e.g. modify sequence of tasks to improve safety
- isolate the hazardous agent – e.g. designated room or local ventilation
- develop administrative controls – e.g. limit the time exposed to the hazard

### *Establish a program*

Include a personal protective equipment program as part of the company health and safety program. Consider steps taken by workers and supervisors in doing the job to identify hazards that require PPE, procedures for selection and fitting, maintenance, storage, monitoring use and training. Above all, the program should state the standards the company wants to meet in the use of PPE and the legislative requirements it needs to meet.

### *Choosing and Using PPE*

If engineering controls are neither feasible nor result in completely eliminating the hazard, PPE must be used. Criteria for choosing PPE should be that they

- provide adequate protection for the worker
- comply with applicable laws, regulations
- meet company standard
- not cause undue discomfort and doesn't create new hazards

Consider why and for how long the PPE is needed, such as

- for a short time due to a temporary process or in case of temporary breakdown of engineering controls
- for long term, regular use
- to compensate for lack of engineering control or inadequate control
- during handling of substances, clean-up of spills, repair of equipment
- to comply with law and regulations.

Also consider the

- nature and size of the hazard
- degree of protection the PPE will provide
- how easy the PPE is to use and how well the worker will accept using the PPE.

#### *Proper fit is important*

A proper fit ensures maximum effectiveness of the equipment, and that the equipment itself does not cause discomfort or pose a further hazard.

#### *Training/Education*

Employees using PPE should receive appropriate training, including

- how to properly fit and wear it
- when it should be worn
- how to care for it and identify when it requires repair, cleaning and disposal
- hazards they are working with and how the PPE will provide them with protection
- any legislative requirements that may apply
- the consequences of not wearing the PPE.

#### *Monitoring and Enforcing*

You must monitor and enforce the use of PPE for them to be effective in protecting workers.

Management should set the example by also wearing PPE when required. Immediate supervisors/managers should monitor PPE use regularly and the health and safety committee members or representatives should do regular inspections.

For more information, contact your Health and Safety Association for details and training specific to your industry. Or call the WSIB Prevention Hotline at 416-344-1016 or 1-800-663-6639.

#### *Workplace Safety and Insurance Board*

Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) plays a key role in the province's occupational health and safety system. Funded by employers, the WSIB is one of the top 10 disability insurers in North America. In addition to a strong prevention mandate, the WSIB provides insurance for injuries and illnesses incurred in workplaces covered under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* and supports early and safe return to work for injured workers.

This information is available in several languages by calling our information hotline at 416-344-4999 .... toll-free 1-800-465-5606 or Telephone Service for the Deaf (TTY): 1-800-387-0050  
Pour obtenir un exemplaire en français, composez le 1-800-465-5606.