

A
short
guide
to the
**Personal
Protective
Equipment
at Work
Regulations
1992**





Introduction

The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at Work Regulations 1992 form part of a series of health and safety regulations implementing EC Directives. They replace a number of old and often excessively detailed laws. The effect of the PPE at Work Regulations is to ensure that certain basic duties governing the provision and use of PPE apply to all situations where PPE is required. The Regulations follow sound principles for the effective and economical use of PPE, which all employers should follow. However, many employers are already familiar with these principles, and if they are already applying them in their workplace these Regulations will require them to do little, if anything, more than they do at present.

This leaflet explains what the Regulations require and gives advice on how you can meet these requirements. It is not intended to be a definitive statement of the law.

The Regulations came into force on 1 January 1993.

What is PPE?

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', eg safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. Waterproof, weatherproof or insulated clothing is subject to the Regulations only if its use is necessary to protect employees against adverse climatic conditions that could otherwise adversely affect their health or safety.

A few types of equipment are not covered by the Regulations, mainly ordinary working clothes and uniforms that don't specifically protect against risks to health and safety, and protective equipment worn by professional sports people during competition.

Provision and use of PPE

The main requirement of the PPE at Work Regulations 1992 is that personal protective equipment is to be supplied and used at work wherever there are risks to health and safety that cannot be adequately controlled in other ways.



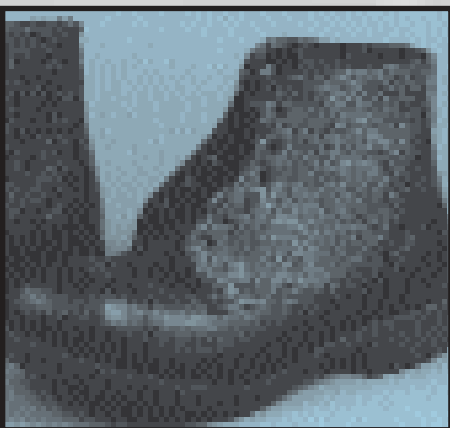
Because the effectiveness of PPE can be easily compromised, eg by not being worn properly, it should always be considered as the last resort and used only where other precautions cannot adequately reduce the risk of injury.

However, where PPE is the only effective means of controlling the risks of injury or ill health, then employers must ensure that it is available for use at work - free of charge.

The self-employed

The self-employed also have a duty to obtain and use the appropriate PPE wherever there is a risk to their health and safety that cannot be adequately controlled by alternative measures. The only exception to this is for those who are classified as self-employed for tax reasons, but who otherwise work in an employee-employer relationship. In this case it will be for the employer to provide suitable PPE.

Assessing suitable PPE



To allow the right type of PPE to be chosen, the different hazards in the workplace need to be considered carefully. This will enable an assessment to be made of which types of PPE are suitable to protect against the hazard and for the job to be done. Your supplier should be able to advise you on the different

types of PPE available and their suitability for different tasks. It may be necessary in a few particularly difficult cases to obtain advice from specialist sources - and of course from the PPE manufacturer.



The following factors should be considered when assessing the suitability of PPE:

- ▼ Is it appropriate for the risks involved and the conditions at the place where exposure to the risk may occur? For example, eye protection designed for providing protection against agricultural pesticides will not offer adequate face protection for someone using an angle grinder to cut steel or stone.
- ▼ Does it prevent or adequately control the risks involved without increasing the overall level of risk?
- ▼ Can it be adjusted to fit the wearer correctly?
- ▼ Has the state of health of those who will be wearing it been taken into account?
- ▼ What are the needs of the job and the demands it places on the wearer? For example the length of time the PPE needs to be worn, the physical effort required to do the job and the requirements for visibility and communication.
- ▼ If more than one item of PPE is being worn, are they compatible? For example, does the use of a particular type of respirator make it difficult to get eye protection to fit properly?

PERSONAL



EYES

Hazards: chemical or metal splash; dust; projectiles; gas and vapour; radiation.

Choices: spectacles; goggles; face-screens.

HEAD AND NECK

Hazards: impact from falling or flying objects; risk of head bumping; hair entanglement.

Choices: helmets; bump caps; hats; caps; sou'westers and cape hoods; skull-caps.

BREATHING

Hazards: dust; vapour; gas; oxygen deficient atmospheres.

Choices: disposable filtering face piece or respirator; half/full face respirators; air-fed helmets; breathing apparatus.

PROTECTING THE BODY

Hazards: temperature extremes; adverse weather; chemical or metal splash; spray from pressure leaks or spray guns; impact or penetration; contaminated dust; excessive wear or entanglement of own clothing.

Choices: conventional or disposable overalls; boiler suits; donkey jackets; specialist protective clothing, eg chain-mail aprons; high visibility clothing.

HANDS AND ARMS

Hazards: abrasion; temperature extremes; cuts and punctures; impact; chemicals; electric shock; skin infection, disease or contamination; vibration.

Choices: gloves; gauntlets; mitts; wristcuffs; armllets.

FEET AND LEGS

Hazards: wet; electrostatic build-up; slipping; cuts and punctures; falling objects; metal and chemical splash; abrasion.

Choices: safety boots and shoes with steel toe caps (and steel mid sole); gaiters; leggings; spats.

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

So a chain-saw operator may need all this equipment...



a safety helmet - replace at intervals recommended by the manufacturer, eg every 2 to 3 years;

ear defenders;

eye protection;

clothing - should be close fitting;

gloves - with protective pad on the back of the left hand;

protection for legs - incorporating loosely-woven long nylon fibres or similar material. All round protection is recommended;

chain-saw operator boots - the casual user may obtain adequate protection by a combination of protective spats and industrial steel toe-capped safety boots.

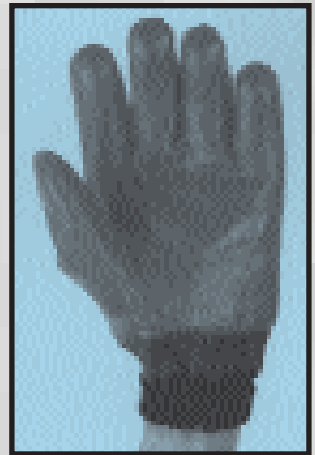
Training

Make sure the user is aware of why PPE is needed, when it is to be used, repaired or replaced and its limitations. Instruct, train, and supervise its use. Because PPE is the last resort after other methods of protection have been considered, it is important that users wear it all the time they are exposed to the risk. Never allow exemptions for those jobs which take just a few 'minutes'. Check regularly the use of PPE and investigate fully any reasons for non-use. Safety signs can be useful reminders to wear PPE.

Maintenance

Equipment needs to be well looked after and be properly accommodated when not in use, for example, stored in a dry, clean cupboard, or in the case of smaller items, such as eye protection, in a box or case. It should be kept clean and in good repair - the manufacturer's maintenance schedule (including recommended replacement periods and shelf lives) should normally be followed. Simple maintenance can be carried out by the trained wearer, but more intricate repairs should only be done by specialist personnel.

To avoid unnecessary loss of time, it is advisable that suitable replacement PPE should always be readily available.



New PPE

Since 1 July 1995, new PPE needs to have been 'CE' marked in accordance with the requirements of the amended Personal Protective Equipment (EC Directive) Regulations 1992. The CE mark signifies that the PPE satisfies certain basic safety requirements, and in most cases will have been tested and certified by an independent body.



Non-CE-marked PPE supplied before 30 June 1995 can continue to be used after that date providing it still offers adequate protection.

Other Regulations

The PPE at Work Regulations do not apply where PPE is provided under six sets of existing Regulations. These Regulations already require the use of some types of PPE to protect against certain risks, for example the Noise at Work Regulations require the use of hearing protection where necessary.

The six sets of Regulations are:

- ▶ the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 2002;
- ▶ the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999;
- ▶ the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002;
- ▶ the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002;
- ▶ the Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989;
- ▶ the Noise at Work Regulations 1989.

Key points to remember

Are there ways (other than PPE) in which the risk can be adequately controlled, eg engineering controls?

If not, check that:

- ▼ PPE is provided;
- ▼ it offers adequate protection for its intended use;
- ▼ those using it are adequately trained in its safe use;
- ▼ it is properly maintained and defects reported;
- ▼ it is returned to its proper accommodation after use.



Further information

Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992. Guidance on Regulations L25 HSE Books 1992 ISBN 0 7176 0415 2

Complete the order form in this leaflet to obtain copies.

Further reading

A guide to the Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989 L102 HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1478 6

Control of substances hazardous to health. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L5 HSE Books 2002 ISBN 0 7176 2534 6

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L21 (Second edition) HSE Books 2002 ISBN 0 7176 2488 9

Reducing noise at work. Guidance on the Noise at Work Regulations 1989

L108 HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1511 1

The selection, use and maintenance of respiratory protective equipment:

A practical guide HSG53 HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1537 5

The Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002 SI 2002/1144

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