

3.24 Personal Protective Equipment

A Guide for Managers and Employees

Legal Requirements

1. The Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37> places a General Duty on every employer to ensure the health safety and welfare of their employees, the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1992/2966/contents/made> extend that duty to assess the requirement for Personal Protective Equipment and to provide Personal Protective Equipment according to the findings of the risk assessment.

Introduction

2. The Personal Protective Equipment Regulations came into force on 1 January 1993 and were revised and amended in 2002, the regulations are accompanied by an Acop L25 Personal Protective Equipment at Work (2nd edition) <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l25.pdf>

South Tyneside Council recognises it duty under these regulations and has provided this policy guidance to enable managers to comply with the regulations.

Definitions

3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is defined in the Regulations as “all equipment” (including clothing used for protection against Temperature extremes, adverse weather)” which is intended to be worn or held by a person at work and which protects them against one or more risks to their health or safety, e.g. safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses.

The PPE at Work Regulations do not apply where the following five sets of regulations require the provision and use of PPE against various hazards. For example, gloves used to prevent dangerous chemicals penetrating the skin would be covered by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 2002 (as amended). The regulations are:

- The Control of Lead at Work Regulations 2002;
- The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999;
- The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2012;
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended);
- The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005

Achieving Compliance

4. Personal Protective Equipment as a control measure should only be used as a last resort in the hierarchy of control measures, therefore South Tyneside Council through this policy guidance will ensure that all PPE is:

- Properly assessed before use to make sure it is fit for purpose;
- Maintained and stored properly;
- Provided with instructions on how to use it safely;
- Used correctly by employees.

Responsibilities of Managers

5. Line managers are responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are carried out in their service areas. Where these risk assessments identify personal protective equipment as a means of control they must ensure that:

- There is no interaction with other PPE (see Section 7 - compatibility);
- The individual users' size and fit has been taken into consideration;
- Storage for it is provided for each individual where required;
- The PPE is maintained properly and that a store of spare parts are kept;
- The user has been trained in its use;
- Records of issue, maintenance and training are kept.

Responsibilities of Employees

6. Where protective clothing is issued or its use is required, it must be worn and maintained in accordance with the instructions given by the employer, which should in turn be based on the manufacturer's instructions for use, employees should therefore:

- Examine PPE issued to them before it is put on and should not be worn if it is defective or has not been cleaned;
- Report any defects or loss of personal protective equipment or clothing, to the appropriate manager as soon as possible;
- Take reasonable care not to misuse or neglect to use PPE.
- Report any concerns they may have about the serviceability of the PPE to the appropriate manager.

Implementation

7. PPE should only be used where the risk cannot be controlled by something equally or more effective. Engineering controls or safe systems of work should always be

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considered first. This is because PPE protects only the person wearing it, whereas measures controlling the risk at source can protect everyone. Additionally, effective protection is achieved only by suitable PPE, correctly fitted and maintained and properly used, if more than one item of PPE is being worn, the different items of PPE must be compatible with each other.

The need for PPE should be identified as part of a risk assessment. This should take into account the particular risks involved and for the circumstances of its use. PPE need not be provided where risks are sufficiently low that they can be considered adequately controlled.

Once it has been decided that PPE is necessary, suitable items should be selected. These should comply with the appropriate British or European Standard.

Selection

8. When selecting PPE the managers will take into account the nature of the job and the demands it places on the worker. This will involve considering the physical effort required doing the job, the methods of work, how long the PPE needs to be worn and requirements for visibility and communication. Users are often best placed to know what is involved and they should be consulted. STC endorses the principle of choosing PPE which will give minimum discomfort to the wearer. Uncomfortable equipment is unlikely to be worn.

If more than one item of PPE is being worn, the different items of PPE must be compatible with each other **see link for PPE Survey -** http://intranet.st.net/documents/documentLibrary_DocumentSummary.asp?pk_document=34342 . For example, wearing certain types of hard hat may impair the effectiveness of ear defenders. In such cases it should be ensured that both items are of such a design that when used together they will adequately control the risk against which they are provided to protect.

Exemptions for Sikhs

Sections 11 and 12 of the Employment Act 1989 provide an exemption from the need to wear head protection in any workplace, including construction sites, for turban-wearing Sikhs, with certain limited exceptions for high-risk tasks.

The exemption applies to any turban-wearing Sikh in the workplace whether they are an employee or not, for example visitors.

It applies solely to turban wearing members of the Sikh faith, the exemption applies only to head protection and Sikhs are required to wear all other necessary PPE under these regulations.

Storage/ Accommodation

9. Suitable storage facilities must be provided for PPE to be safely stored or kept when it is not in use.

The storage should be adequate to protect the PPE from contamination, loss or damage, for example harmful substances, damp or sunlight. Where PPE may become

contaminated during use, the accommodation should be separate from any provided for ordinary clothing and where necessary be suitably labeled.

Where quantities of PPE are stored, equipment which is already in use should be clearly segregated from that which is waiting repair or maintenance.

Maintenance

10. A system of maintenance is needed to ensure that the PPE continues to provide the degree of protection for which it was designed. Maintenance includes:

- Cleaning.
- Disinfection.
- Examination.
- Replacement.
- Repair and testing.

The responsibility for maintenance must be laid down together with the details of the procedures to be followed and their frequency. The maintenance programme will vary with the type of equipment and the use to which it is put. Manufacturers' maintenance schedules and instructions should normally be followed.

Members of staff must report any loss, damage, or obvious defect in PPE to their supervisor. The supervisor must take appropriate action to rectify the situation.

Training

11. Managers must ensure that training includes an explanation of the risk which the PPE is designed to control - people are more likely to wear and use equipment properly if they are told why it should be used. Practical training needs to take full account of the following:

- Practice in putting on, wearing and removing the equipment.
- Practice and instruction in inspection and, where appropriate, testing of the PPE before use.
- Practice and instruction in the maintenance that can be undertaken by the user, such as cleaning and replacement of certain components.
- Instruction in the safe storage of equipment.

In addition employees must also be given clear instructions in how they can obtain PPE. If disposable PPE is used, it is important that users are told when it should be discarded and replaced.

Record Keeping

12. Managers should keep following records.

- PPE selection assessments;

- Information, instruction and training provided;
- Records of maintenance and inspection of PPE (other than that designed to be disposable and/or of limited life).

Health and Safety Support

13. All Corporate Groups have a designated Health and Safety Advisor who is available to advise in the drafting of Risk Assessment and Procedures, and, to advise on the selection of Personal Protective Equipment.

Monitoring of Compliance with this Guidance

14. The monitoring of compliance to this policy guidance will be carried out periodically by the Occupational Health and Safety Team.

Review

15. The guidance will be reviewed biannually as a rule and when any changes in legislative requirement should occur.

The guidance will also be reviewed as a consequence of any restructuring of South Tyneside Council which will affect this policy.