



Personal Protective Equipment and the WORKPLACE HAZARD ASSESSMENT —OSHA Compliance for Supervisors

What is personal protective equipment?

Personal protective equipment, or PPE, is designed to protect employees from injuries or illnesses resulting from contact with chemical, biological, radiological, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other workplace hazards. Besides face shields, safety glasses, hard hats, and safety shoes, PPE includes a variety of devices and garments such as goggles, coveralls, gloves, vests, earplugs, and respirators.

When is PPE necessary?

Using PPE is often essential, but it is generally the last line of defense after engineering controls, work practices, and administrative controls. Engineering controls involve physically changing a machine (like installing a guard) or work environment (like using a fume hood) to eliminate or reduce a hazard. Administrative controls involve changing how or when employees do their jobs, such as scheduling work and rotating employees. Work practices involve training workers how to perform tasks in ways that reduce their exposure to hazards. When these controls are not feasible or do not provide sufficient protection, OSHA requires employers to protect their employees with personal protective equipment (PPE).

How do I know what kind of PPE is necessary?

As a supervisor, you must first assess your workplace to determine if hazards are present that require the use of PPE. This is done through a **WORKPLACE HAZARD ASSESSMENT**. OSHA **requires** employers to make a written certification that a hazard assessment has been performed (29 CFR 1910 Subpart I).

UConn supervisory personnel (including Principal Investigators and designated staff with supervisory responsibilities) must complete a WHA form to comply with this OSHA requirement: www.ehs.uconn.edu/forms/WHA.php. Completed forms must be submitted to EHS and a copy kept at the work location and made readily available to employees.

I've completed a WORKPLACE HAZARD ASSESSMENT, what's next?

Once you've determined what PPE is required, **communicate** your PPE selection decisions to your employees. Make sure to **select PPE that fits** your workers properly. An improper fit can undermine the PPE's performance. Also, an employee is more likely to resist wearing PPE if it is uncomfortable. Provide the necessary PPE to your employees and **require them to use it**. This last point is often missed by some supervisors, who leave it up to the employee to decide for themselves on whether or not they will wear their PPE. Ultimately, in OSHA's eyes, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that their employees are properly protected. Lastly, you must also **train employees** who are required to wear PPE on how to do the following:

- Use PPE properly
- Be aware of when PPE is necessary
- Know what kind of PPE is necessary
- Understand the limitations of PPE in protecting employees from injury
- Put on, adjust, wear, and remove PPE; and
- Maintain PPE properly.

For PPE training assistance, contact EHS at 6-3613 and ask to speak to a staff member who specializes in the hazard/area of concern. Several safety training programs are available through EHS that cover PPE selection, use, and care requirements. Visit www.ehs.uconn.edu/training to see and register for the scheduled training sessions.