



LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Where your risk assessment has highlighted a hazard that cannot be eliminated completely from the workplace, or adequately controlled in any other way, a further option is to issue Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to your employees to protect them against the risk presented by the hazard.

You must adhere to the **PPE at Work Regulations**, which cover the use and issue of PPE to employees. The main requirements are given below, and focus on the fact that the employer must carefully select suitable PPE that is **fit for the purpose that it is intended to be used in**.

What is PPE?

Definition of PPE: PPE is all equipment worn or held by the employee to protect him/her against one or more health or safety risks at the workplace, including all complementary equipment or accessories that can contribute to this purpose.

Examples of PPE include high visibility clothing, respirators, safety spectacles or goggles, ear defenders and safety helmets.

What does "fit for purpose" mean?

The PPE you provide must be suitable and provide adequate protection for its intended use against the specific risks and hazards involved in your workplace.

For instance, having identified that chemical vapour is a hazard in your workplace and that your employees should be issued with PPE in the form of a respirator, a particulate respirator would not offer adequate protection from the risk and would not be fit for purpose PPE.

How do I choose suitable PPE?

Consider the characteristics that the PPE must have to be effective against the identified hazard and the specific demands of the work activity, versus the characteristics of the PPE available.

eg how long is the PPE to be worn for, how physical is the work activity, have the employees other PPE with which it will be worn, is all the PPE compatible, is the PPE adjustable to fit?

Your equipment supplier and/or manufacturer should be able to advise on the performance features of the PPE available and its compliance with the relevant harmonised [European Performance Standards](#), and you must also ensure that the PPE you provide is CE-marked, and labelled appropriately.

What does a CE Mark mean?

All PPE sold must comply with PPE Regulations.

Not to be confused with the PPE at Work Regulations, the PPE Regulations relate to the actual sales and supply of PPE, rather than its use and issue, and state that the equipment manufacturer must obtain a CE mark for all PPE manufactured after June 1995.

In order to qualify for a CE mark, the PPE must usually be tested by an independent body to the relevant harmonised [European Performance Standards](#) for that particular piece of equipment and, in some instances, the quality system used in its production is regularly audited.

NB - the CE mark does not in itself identify that the product is fit for the intended purpose, just that it has fulfilled basic safety performance standards. The employer must still ensure that the equipment is fit for his specific purpose.

Other factors to consider when issuing PPE

- You must ensure that the PPE is available for use and issued free of charge.
- Appropriate training must be provided to employees to advise why PPE is needed and its limitations, and when and how it is to be used and looked after.
- Appropriate facilities for the maintenance and storage of equipment when not in use should be provided. You must ensure that the PPE is kept clean and functional, and have replacement PPE available in case of loss or damage.

The effectiveness of PPE can easily be compromised eg by inadequate cleaning, not being worn properly etc, and as it is issued as a last line of defence, it is essential that the employer makes sure that:

- a) the equipment issued is of the highest quality, and
- b) that it is maintained appropriately.

Employees must:

- Use the PPE provided to them whenever necessary and as they have been trained to do so
- Take reasonable care of PPE by returning it to its storage place after use and reporting any loss or damage to the PPE immediately



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