



MONTHLY SAFETY BRIEF: PPE

There are some critical safety topics that need to be reviewed more frequently than others and personal protective equipment (PPE) falls into that category. We had a safety brief on this topic back in 2016, but this is an updated version prepared by Shane.

In our work as environmental, health and safety consultants, PPE use is common and should be second nature. But it is good practice to review some general helpful tips on PPE just to keep sharp. So here you are...

The best way to protect workers from a safety hazard is to eliminate or control that hazard. When this can't be done adequately, PPE must be used.

PPE is worn to minimize exposure to specific hazards, but it does not reduce the hazard itself, nor does it guarantee permanent or total protection. A good example is the protective suits and respirators we don for asbestos and lead projects. The effectiveness of your PPE can depend on how you care for it. Probably the most important part of any PPE program is the on-going maintenance required to be effective.

PPE maintenance is continued inspection. Before you put on a piece of protective equipment, give it a visual once over. It should be clean, it should have all of its parts, and it should not have any damage that would affect its function.

Chemicals in the work environment and oils from your skin can degrade the effectiveness of PPE because they will end up back on your skin, and because they will damage the equipment itself, over time. For most non-porous materials (such as plastics and rubber), plain soap and water or a wet wipe will work for cleaning.

For cloth or leather materials, a dry brush will remove loose dirt, and a damp cloth with some fabric or leather cleaner will clean the surface.

Here are some tips for the proper care of specific types of PPE:

HARD HATS

- Clean regularly with warm water and soap and allow to air dry.
- Store out of the sun, away from extreme temperatures, and in a safe place where it can't get knocked around and damaged.
- Check the headband to make sure it isn't stretched or worn and that the hat fits comfortably on the head.
- Replace hard hat if it is cracked, dented, or has taken a heavy blow or if it is more than 5 years old (check underside of front of brim and look for circle see pic). The inside number is the year the hard hat was manufactured and the outside number the arrow is pointing to is the month it was manufactured.

EYEWEAR

- Clean safety glasses and goggles regularly with mild soap and water.
- Wash lenses with water before wiping to prevent scratching or blow dust and grit before wiping if there is no water available.
- Store in a clean dust-proof case or in a safe place where it won't get scratched or otherwise damaged.
- Replace safety glasses if frames are bent, and replace goggles if headbands are loose, twisted, knotted or worn. Replace any kind of eye protection if lenses are scratched or pitted and impair vision.



HEARING PROTECTION

- Wipe earmuffs with a damp cloth after each use, store them in a safe place and replace cushions when they lose their resilience.
- Wash reusable earplugs every day, store them in a clean case, and replace if plugs are hard or discolored.
- Wipe canal caps (headband plugs) with a damp cloth after each use, store them in a safe place so the headband won't get bent or twisted and replace if the bands are damaged and no longer fit comfortably.

GLOVES

- Keep clean and dry
- Have a backup pair in case gloves get wet (or must be washed) and need to dry.
- Check for holes, cracks, and other damage before each use.
- Replace worn or damaged gloves right away.

FOOTWEAR

- Check for cracks or holes, separation of materials, broken buckles or laces.
- Examine soles regularly for pieces of metal or other embedded items that could present electrical or tripping hazards.
- Wipe wet or soiled shoes with a clean cloth or paper towel. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for more thorough cleaning.

SAFETY VESTS

- Keep your high-visibility apparel clean to maintain reflectivity and visibility.
- Replace your high-visibility apparel when it is worn, heavily soiled, or faded.
- Wear your high-visibility apparel on top of all other clothing, including jackets.

Remember, wearing poorly maintained or malfunctioning PPE could be more dangerous than not wearing any form of protection at all. You might think you are protected when, in reality, you are not.

If you have any issues or safety concerns with your PPE, please let your Project Manager know immediately!



PPE Safety Quiz

1. Wearing the correct personal protective equipment can eliminate a safety hazard.
 True
 False

2. Is regular inspection the most important part of a PPE maintenance program?
 True
 False

3. Which of these is **not** a way to care for a hard hat properly?
 - a. Clean frequently with mild soap and water.
 - b. Repair a hardhat if it is cracked.
 - c. Store it out of the sun and away from extreme temperatures.
 - d. Check the headband to make sure it is not cracked or stretched.

4. To prevent scratches, safety eyewear lenses should be washed with water before using.
 True
 False

5. Should reusable earplugs be replaced if they become hard or discolored?
 Yes
 No

6. If you have a question or concern about your PPE, you should wait to contact your Project Manager until they are on-site at your project since it is probably no big deal.
 True
 False

SCORE: PASS / FAIL

Employee Signature



Supervisor Signature

Date