

Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992

Definitions under the regulations

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) means equipment designed to be worn or held by persons to protect them against one or more risks; it excludes working clothes and uniforms, and equipment relating to road safety (such as crash helmets, but includes 'high visibility' clothing) sport, self-defence and risk detection (e.g. dosimeters) or for handling food. However, risk does include exposure to wet or extremes of temperature.

Where these regulations overlap with duties relating to control of lead, asbestos, noise, ionising radiations, hazardous substances (COSHH) and to head protection, then the latter take precedence; elsewhere, both sets of regulations apply. The regulations do not apply to shipboard activities under the direction of the master but would apply to shore-based contractors.

PROVISION (Regulation 4): Suitable PPE shall be provided to each employee exposed to risks not adequately controlled by other means. PPE shall not be suitable unless it –

- is appropriate to the risk, the conditions of use and for how long it is worn
- takes account of ergonomics (eg visibility) and the characteristics of the workstation
- poses no risk to their state of health (eg heat stress)
- is capable of fitting correctly (eg by adjustment)
- combats risk so far as is practicable without increasing overall risk (e.g. hindrance)
- complies with UK legislation implementing EC Directives (e.g. is CE marked) is provided for personal use only, where this is necessary in the interests of hygiene and reducing risks to health.

COMPATIBILITY (Regulation 5): Where the presence of more than one risk requires that more than one item of PPE be worn simultaneously, they shall be compatible and continue to be effective against the risks.

ASSESSMENT (Regulation 6): Employers shall, before choosing PPE, assess whether it is suitable by -

- comparing the available PPE with the required characteristics
- determining whether it is compatible with other PPE which is in use and which an employee would be required to wear simultaneously. Assessments shall be reviewed following significant change in the work or if no longer valid, and any changes implemented.

MAINTENANCE (Regulation 7): Employers shall ensure that PPE is maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair, including replacement or cleaning as appropriate.

The guidance suggests that responsibility be defined for cleaning, disinfection, examination, replacement, repairs and testing as appropriate, with records kept for significant items (eg fall arresting equipment, breathing apparatus) but not everyday items such as gloves. If disposable PPE is used, users should know when it should be discarded and replaced.

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ACCOMMODATION (Regulation 8): Accommodation shall be provided for PPE that is not in use. The storage should protect PPE from contamination, loss or damage by harmful substances, damp or sunlight, and where it becomes contaminated in use should be separate from ordinary clothing.

INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION & TRAINING (Regulation 9): Employers shall provide employees with adequate and appropriate information, instruction and training on -

- the risks that the PPE will avoid or limit
- the purpose and manner in which PPE is to be used
- what the employee shall do to maintain the PPE and shall ensure that this information is kept available to employees. And, where appropriate, at suitable intervals organise demonstrations in the wearing of PPE.

The training should include assessing risks not avoided by other means defining the characteristics of suitable PPE, taking account of the risks created by PPE (eg limited vision, hearing)

- an explanation of the risks
- the operation, performance and limitations of PPE
- instructions on selection and use
- any permit to work procedures involving PPE
- the interaction with other PPE and working conditions
- inadequate fitting (eg long hair, beards or spectacles)
- personal factors (eg hygiene)
- recognition of defects and reporting loss or damage
- practice in the use, inspection and maintenance of PPE
- instructions on storage.

USE & LOSS (Regulation 10-11): The employer shall take reasonable steps to ensure that PPE is properly used. Employees shall -

- use any PPE provided in accordance with the training and instruction received
- make full and proper use of PPE
- after use, return PPE to the accommodation provided report any defect or loss (r11).

CHARGES: *Under section 9 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 employers cannot charge employees for the provision or use of PPE at work where there is a specific duty to provide it. Section 9 applies to these regulations. Employers can ask for a contribution towards the cost of work wear which is not a statutory health and safety requirement.*