

Title:

Safety in 30 Days, Personal Protective Equipment in the Workplace

Word Count:

438

Summary:

Personal Protective Equipment can play a role in a small business safety program. The safety program can lead to cost savings for the small business.

Keywords:

insurance discounts, insurance claims, small business forum, small business, safety, health and safety

Article Body:

Safety in 30 Days, Personal Protective Equipment in the Workplace

There are ways that employers should identify and assess risks with a view to preventing and reducing them. There should be a hierarchy of prevention and control measures - starting with prevention of the risk, and if this is not possible, technical/engineering controls, safe systems of work and information or training should be used instead. Personal protective equipment should only be used as a last resort.

Unfortunately, some employers encourage workers to use personal protective equipment without ever considering the introduction of prevention and control measures that could eliminate the use of personal protective equipment. This leads to a number of problems:

Personal protective equipment protects only the person wearing it, whereas measures controlling the risk at source can protect everyone at the workplace. Theoretical maximum levels of protection are seldom achieved with personal protective equipment in practice and the actual level of protection is difficult to assess.

Protection is often ineffective because the personal protective equipment is not suitable, incorrectly fitted, not properly maintained, and may be used improperly.

Personal protective equipment may restrict the wearer by limiting mobility or visibility, or by requiring additional weight to be carried. As well as the health and safety problems that this may cause, it can also lead to a 'blame the worker' culture when the personal protective equipment is discarded because of the discomfort that it can cause.

Using personal protective equipment in a hot climate can be very uncomfortable for the worker. For example, using a full-face mask and body protection in full sunshine during the hot season can be almost impossible. It can result in dehydration, headaches and even fainting

Different types of personal protective equipment include:

helmet or head-protector

hearing protectors such as ear-plugs or ear-muffs

eye-protectors such as goggles and face shields

breathing masks with different types of filters

gloves of different material

safety footwear

protective aprons, overalls or clothing

wet weather protective clothing

safety belts and life-lines

Hazards even where technical or engineering controls, safe systems of work and other techniques have been applied, it is possible that some hazards might remain. These hazards may lead to injuries to the:

lungs, for example, from breathing in contaminated air

head and feet, for example, from falling materials

eyes, for example, from flying particles or splashes of corrosive liquids

ears and hearing from noise

skin, for example, from contact with corrosive materials

body, for example, from extremes of heat or cold

Sometimes, personal protective equipment is needed in these cases to reduce the risks, but only to supplement the other risk control measures already put in place.