Clothing and Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Clothing and Safety

An important but often overlooked aspect of safety is what we decide to wear each day on the job. Safety rules, weather, type of work, hazards of the work, and many other factors weigh in on what type of clothing is optimal for the tasks being completed that day. It is vital to consider the impact clothing can have on safety at work.

WHAT’ S THE DANGER

SAFETY CLOTHING

Safety clothing is important in the workplace as it protects users against any health and safety risks at work.

WHAT IS PPE?

PPE stands for Personal Protective Equipment, and refers to garments and equipment that are specifically designed to help staff avoid hazards and injury. These are commonly decided upon after a risk assessment has been conducted.

WHAT IS PROTECTIVE CLOTHING?

Protective clothing is a type of PPE (personal protective equipment). Protective clothing is any clothing specifically designed, treated, or made to help minimise risk to a worker’s health and safety while working.

- Regular clothing or footwear is not protective clothing. For example, a worker’s everyday clothing such as pants or jeans worn at work are not generally considered protective clothing.
- Uniforms or other clothing worn solely to identify a person

as an employee, are not normally considered protective clothing.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

THE MOST IMPORTANT ITEMS OF PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

Boots – important for preventing foot injuries such as punctures, sprains, crushing, and falls, especially steel-capped versions. Gives the foot an extra protective, sturdy layer.

Specialist fabrics – such as breathable, flame-retardant fabrics, or fabrics that are tough but that do not restrict employee movement.

Gloves – the hands are sensitive areas of the body and the most used part of the body during work. Hand protection is essential to avoid burns or splashing from harmful substances.

Respiratory protection – some industries have presence of debris, dust, particles, gases, and other things that can be damaging to the respiratory system. As such, in these situations, it’s important to cover the nose and mouth.

Eyes and ears – your sensory organs are probably the most delicate, sensitive areas of the body and as such they need protection with the use of safety goggles and noise-cancelling headphones.

Headwear – helmets protect the delicate skull against falling debris and potential building collapse. Other headwear items can include beanies to keep the head warm, and hi-vis versions to boost visibility.

IDENTIFY HAZARDS WHEN CHOOSING PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

You need to know what the hazards are before you can consider potential protective clothing options.

FIT AND COMFORT

- Protective Clothing should be easy to put on and take off.

- It should not interfere with normal movement required for the job. For example walking, climbing stairs or ladders, sitting, standing, and operating plant or machinery.
- It should not be too loose or baggy. Loose or baggy clothing could get snagged on objects or cause tripping.
- Pants and sleeves should not hang down over hands or feet. Rolled up sleeves and trousers could get caught in machinery.
- Protective clothing should cover an entire area, even when a worker is moving. For example, if a person raises their arms or leans over, clothing should not leave parts exposed.

CONSIDER THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF YOUR WORKERS

When selecting protective clothing you need to consider the individual requirements of workers.

- Does the supplier offer a good enough range of sizes to fit your workforce?
- Does your supplier provide protective clothing for both men and women?
- Is the clothing suitable for any religious or cultural requirements of your workers?
- Will any of the protective clothing aggravate any medical conditions or allergies of your workers, such as a latex allergy?

GET EXPERT ADVICE

Your PPE supplier and a workplace health and safety professional should be able to provide advice on the best protective clothing options for your situation.

Most protective clothing has limitations on the level or type of protection it will provide, for example:

- the level of impact protection for different types of eyewear (low, medium, or high impact)
- clothing or footwear which is only resistant to specific chemicals
- maximum and minimum temperatures thermal clothing will

provide protection for

- the maximum level of decibels hearing protection will protect for.
- Your supplier or workplace health and safety professional should be able to give you specific advice on the most appropriate type based on the level of protection your workers need.

FINAL WORD

Pay more attention to the clothing you choose to wear to work. Plan for what the weather will be or whatever the environment is if working indoors. Choose types of clothes that will protect you as well as fit comfortably. Proper clothing will allow you to focus on your work and work more efficiently.