Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Meeting Kit

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as “PPE”, is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. These injuries and illnesses may result from contact with chemical, radiological, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other workplace hazards. Personal protective equipment may include items such as gloves, safety glasses and shoes, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls, vests and full body suits.

EMPLOYEE REFUSAL TO WEAR PPE

An employee’s refusal to wear PPE may be cause for discipline, particularly if the refusal creates a risk for other employees at the workplace.

ENSURE PROPER USE OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

All personal protective equipment should be safely designed and constructed, and should be maintained in a clean and reliable fashion. It should fit comfortably, encouraging worker use. If the personal protective equipment does not fit properly, it can make the difference between being safely covered or dangerously exposed. When engineering, work practice, and administrative controls are not feasible or do not provide sufficient protection, employers must provide personal protective equipment to their workers and ensure its proper use. Employers are also required to train each worker required to use personal protective equipment to know:

- When it is necessary, What kind is necessary, How to properly put it on, adjust, wear and take it off, The limitations of the equipment, Proper care, maintenance, useful life, and disposal of the equipment

If PPE is to be used, a PPE program should be implemented. This program should address the hazards present; the selection, maintenance, and use of PPE; the training of employees; and monitoring of the program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.

PPE ISN'T PERFECT

In the hierarchy of risk control, PPE is considered to rank lowest and represent the option of last resort. It is only appropriate where the hazard in question cannot be totally removed or controlled in such a way that harm is unlikely.

- PPE protects only the person using it, whereas measures controlling the risk at source can protect everyone.
- Effective protection can only be achieved by equipment which is correctly fitted, maintained and properly used at all times;
- PPE may restrict the wearer by limiting mobility, visibility or by requiring additional weight to be carried.
- Use of PPE may alter employees' perception of the hazards they are dealing with.
- PPE is critically important as it is generally only used where other measures are insufficient preventive and reduce fatalities, injuries and diseases.

EMPLOYER'S OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE PPE

Selecting, Using, and Maintaining PPE: Employers are responsible for selecting, providing and fitting of appropriate PPE for the hazardous exposures in the workplace. Consult the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for advice. Consider how the materials will be used, the quantity used, and the types and duration of exposure. Ensure that the PPE provides a good fit. The PPE should not impair dexterity or flexibility or create safety issues such as

entrapment.

EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBILITY

- Understand the limitations of the PPE and know what to do in the event of exposure or device failure (e.g. how to use emergency showers, eyewash stations, and first aid).
- Understand when to discard/replace PPE (e.g. end of shift, every hour).
- Report any missing or defective devices to the supervisor.

WHEN AN EMPLOYEE PROVIDES THEIR OWN PPE

If an employee wishes to provide their own PPE, employers must ensure that the employee can adhere to PPE protocols, including measures for donning, doffing, and disposing of PPE. Some issues that may arise are:

- Can the employer ensure the self-provided PPE is being properly cleaned or disposed of?
- Is the self-provided PPE fit for its purpose?
- Are there any hazards associated with the re-use of self-provided PPE?

FINAL WORD

PPE used in hazardous work environments is a crucial last resort to prevent serious injury to workers. Employers must ensure that they take all steps to fulfill their obligations in providing effective PPE to workers in hazardous work environments.