Roofing Safety PPE Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Roofing is inherently dangerous work. We’re often high above the ground, exposed to the elements, and working with potentially hazardous materials. While proper procedures and training are essential, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is our last line of defense against injury. We’re not just talking about minor cuts or scrapes; we’re talking about preventing serious injuries and even fatalities. Think about falls, head injuries, eye injuries, and respiratory problems. Proper PPE can significantly reduce these risks and ensure we go home safe at the end of each workday.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Roofing is dangerous enough with the right safety gear. But without the right PPE, roofers face a drastically increased risk of severe injury and even death. The hazards are numerous and can have devastating consequences:

- **Falls:** Falls are the leading cause of death in construction, and roofing is no exception. Without proper fall protection (harnesses, lanyards, lifelines), a fall from even a relatively low roof can result in serious injuries or death.
- **Head Injuries:** Falling objects, such as tools, debris, or materials, can cause head injuries ranging from concussions to skull fractures. Without hard hats, these injuries are much more likely and severe.
- **Eye Injuries:** Dust, debris, flying nails, and chemical splashes can cause serious eye injuries. Safety glasses or goggles are crucial for protecting our vision.
- **Hand and Foot Injuries:** Sharp objects, hot surfaces, and heavy materials can cause injuries to hands and feet. Gloves and appropriate footwear are essential for protecting these extremities.
- **Respiratory Problems:** Exposure to dust, fumes, and chemicals

from roofing materials can lead to respiratory problems. Respirators or dust masks can help filter out these harmful substances.
- **Sun Exposure:** Prolonged exposure to the sun can lead to sunburn, heatstroke, and an increased risk of skin cancer. Protective clothing, sunscreen, and hats are important for minimizing sun exposure.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Using the right PPE and using it correctly is absolutely crucial for staying safe up on the roof. It’s not enough to just wear the gear; you need to know how to inspect it, maintain it, and use it properly.

Fall Protection (Harness, Lanyard, Lifeline):

- **Harness Inspection:** Before you even think about putting it on, give your harness a good once-over. Check the webbing – that’s the fabric part – for any cuts, tears, fraying, chemical stains, or if it looks faded or stiff from the sun. Those are all signs of damage.
- **Buckles and D-Rings:** Make sure those buckles and D-rings are in good shape – no bending, cracks, or rust.
- **Harness Fit:** When you put the harness on, it should fit snugly but still let you move around. Adjust the straps so it’s not too loose; a loose harness won’t do you any good if you fall.
- **Lanyard Inspection:** Now, the lanyard: check it for any cuts, fraying, or broken fibres. Check where it connects to the harness and the anchor point – make sure those connections are solid and locked tight.
- **Lifeline Inspection:** If you’re using a lifeline, give that a good inspection too. Look for wear, cuts, and any damage to the rope itself. Check the hardware like carabiners and rope grabs to make sure they’re working right.

Hard Hats:

Hard hats are a no-brainer on any roof. They protect your head

from falling objects. Before you put it on, give it a quick check for cracks, dents, or any other damage. Take a look at the suspension inside – that's the part that cushions your head. Make sure it's all there and adjusted right. If your hard hat takes a hit, even if you don't see any damage, replace it. The inside might be damaged, and it won't protect you the same way. Also, hard hats don't last forever. Check the manufacturer's recommendations for when to replace them.

Eye Protection (Safety Glasses/Goggles):

Eyes are precious, so protect them! Wear safety glasses or goggles whenever you're on the roof to keep out dust, debris, and any chemical splashes. Make sure they fit comfortably and cover your eyes well, including from the sides. Check them regularly for scratches or cracks and keep them clean so you can see clearly.

Hand Protection (Gloves):

Gloves are essential for protecting your hands from all sorts of hazards: cuts, scrapes, burns (especially if you're working with torches or hot asphalt), and chemicals. Pick the right gloves for the job you're doing. Leather gloves are good for general work, while specialized gloves are needed for handling chemicals or hot materials. Give your gloves a check for tears, holes, or wear and tear. If they're damaged, get a new pair.

Foot Protection (Work Boots):

Good work boots with good traction are a must on a roof. They'll help you keep your footing and prevent slips and falls. Steel-toed boots add extra protection against things falling on your feet. Check your boots regularly for wear, especially on the soles. If the treads are worn down or the boots are damaged, it's time for a new pair.

Respiratory Protection (Dust Masks/Respirators):

If you're working with anything that creates dust, fumes, or vapours – like cutting roofing felt or using adhesives – wear a dust mask or respirator that's right for the job. Make sure it

fits snugly against your face to create a good seal. If you're using a respirator, you must be trained on how to use it, maintain it, and store it properly. Change disposable masks regularly, and clean reusable respirators according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Sun Protection (Hats, Sunscreen, Protective Clothing):

Don't forget about the sun! Wear a hat to protect your face and neck. Use sunscreen with a high SPF, even on cloudy days, and reapply it often, especially if you're sweating. Light-colored, loose-fitting clothes will help you stay cool and protect you from the sun. Long sleeves and pants give you even more protection.

FINAL WORD

PPE is non-negotiable on a roofing job. It's our responsibility to use it correctly, inspect it regularly, and maintain it properly. Making PPE a priority is making our own safety a priority.