Take Care of Your Protective Wear



WHAT'S AT STAKE

You're skilled at your job, and you're careful about working safely. But sometimes all that stands between you and an injury is your personal protective equipment (PPE).

WHAT'S THE DANGER

A metal fragment flying off a grinder can happen in a second. Unless you're wearing suitable protective eyewear, that second can cause a lifelong eye injury. A piece of rock can fall from a mine tunnel roof or an item of stock can slide off a high storage shelf. If you're wearing your required hardhat, it will be dented instead of your head.

EXAMPLE

A machinist was repairing a large piece of equipment. A minor repair had been made and the machine was turned on for a test run. Suddenly, something snapped internally and the machine began to collapse around the worker. Two parts of the machine came at her from either side and clamped her hardhat between them. She reacted quickly by ducking down and away from the impact. As the hat pulled free of the worker's head, it was crushed between the machine parts. Later investigation revealed that if the worker hadn't been wearing a hardhat, her head would have been smashed between the two pieces of steel.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Inspecting and caring for your head protection is vital. If your hardhat is damaged or defective in any way, replace it immediately.

- Are the inside straps working properly? Are they properly adjusted? If the inside straps no longer fit, then you are drastically reducing your hardhat's protective value.
- Is the outer shell cracked or weakened with obvious damage?
- Are the chin straps frayed or split compromising their ability to hold the hardhat on your head?
- Is your hardhat clean? Mold and mildew can grow on any surface damp with your sweat and can cause allergy problems that can affect your eyesight and ability to breathe freely. Clean your hardhat according to the manufacturer's directions.

Eye Protection

Wearing safety glasses, goggles or shields to protect your eyesight isn’t very effective if they are always slipping down your nose.

- Do they fit? If not, talk to your supervisor and get a pair that fit properly.
- Are they clean? Following the manufacturer’s instructions, clean your eye protection as many times a day as necessary.
- Are they cracked, scratched or broken? Duct tape is not a safe repair. If your glasses are broken, cracked or scratched, get a new pair.

Hearing Protection

- Do not use one-use ear plugs more than once.
- Re-usable earplugs, canal caps and ear muffs must be cleaned on a regular basis. Dirt and oil will reduce their fit and lessen their protective qualities.

Hand Protection

There are as many different types of gloves as there are jobs in the workplace. Use the right kind of glove that fits properly for the job you are performing.

- Always make sure your gloves are in good repair and do not have any rips or tears.

Foot Protection

Caring for your foot protection is a daily requirement.

- Check the soles, laces and eyelets for wear. Also check the inside soles of your footwear. Any excess wear or damage will compromise their protective properties.
- Make sure your footwear is free of contaminants such as oil or grease, which will eliminate their ability to provide traction.

Three Quick PPE Rules

1. Always consult the manufacturer’s instructions before cleaning your PPE.
2. Never share PPE.
3. If your PPE is broken, cracked or compromised in any way, replace it with equipment that is in good repair.

FINAL WORD

It’s important that you select and wear the correct PPE as directed by your supervisor. It’s equally important that you inspect and care for the equipment properly, so that it will protect you when you need it!