



Tools of the trade

By Jennifer Tsui

Are you wearing all the right protective gear to do your job? Find out what you're responsible for when it comes to personal protective equipment.

Don't underestimate the role that basic personal protective equipment and clothing can play in keeping you safe from injury on the job. Personal protective equipment is any gear, from hard hats to boots and everything in between, that protects the worker from workplace hazards and potential injury.

Employers and workers have their individual responsibilities when it comes to ensuring everyone wears the right equipment. It's crucial both parties understand what workers are expected to provide for themselves and what they can expect their employers to provide.

Worker responsibilities

Workers need to provide their own clothing, shirts, and long pants to protect against weather and workplace hazards. Unless another agreement has been reached with the employer, workers are also expected to acquire their own general purpose work gloves, protective footwear, and safety headgear.

If there's a danger of making contact with moving parts of machinery, equipment, or tools, workers should ensure they:

- Avoid wearing loose-fitting or frayed clothing.
- Remove accessories such as rings, dangling neckwear, loose-fitting bracelets, and watch bands.
- Confine long hair.
- Wear a short-sleeved shirt and long pants.

Specialized protection

If the nature of the work requires the worker to use specific equipment or specialized gloves, it is up to the employer to provide these. This includes fall, respiratory, eye, and hearing protection, and any other specialized protective equipment required by the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

Employer responsibilities

It's the employer's responsibility to enforce the use of personal protective equipment and ensure that workers are wearing the appropriate gear.

If different phases of the project or the construction process require alternative types of personal protective equipment, employers need to make sure workers are aware of that and are using the right equipment.

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Workers need to be trained in how to use specialized protective equipment, like fall protection, before they are used on the job site. Educating workers on their equipment should also include showing them how to maintain it in good working order and in sanitary condition.

Foot protection

Unless something specialized is required, footwear and boots are the responsibility of the worker. Since ill-chosen footwear can contribute to injuries, great care should be taken in choosing the proper footwear and maintaining it well.

- Choosing – Footwear must protect and support the ankle, sole, and toes. Safety footwear with a CSA “green

triangle” symbol meets these requirements.

- Maintaining – It is the worker's responsibility to keep personal safety footwear in good repair. For example, exposed metal toecaps can be hazardous near electricity.
- Wearing – Keep laces tied up at all times to avoid snagging or tripping.

Head protection

Your head is the most important and vulnerable part of your body. Make sure you take appropriate steps to protect it. When entering a construction site, workers must wear CSA-approved hard hats. When using a hard hat:


- A chinstrap or ratchet may be required if your job involves constant bending


and your head is below the waistline.

- Keep it clean.
- Inspect it regularly.
- Change the suspension harness at least every five years.
- Don't use solvents to clean it.
- Don't drill holes into it unless approved by the manufacturer.
- Don't paint it.
- Don't use it if it has a crack or a deep gouge.
- Don't throw it around or use it as a hammer.

Source: This information was taken from the WorkSafeBC toolbox meeting guide on personal protective equipment (see page 30).

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THE SAFETY ZONE

Stay Clear. Stay Safe.

Look up and live. Before you start work, look up and around the site and make sure you and your crew are aware of all overhead lines. Ladders, cranes and pipes are all good conductors of electricity, and remember, it doesn't need to be touching a power line to become energized.

As a supervisor or foreman you hold your workers' lives in your hands. Ensure that they have the critical safety training they need to go home safely to their families.

This message brought to you by the Cooperative Safety Program partners.



Learn more about how to stay clear and stay safe, visit coopsafetyprogram.ca