

Personal protective equipment



The term **personal protective equipment** (or PPE for short) is used to describe equipment and clothing that protects against health or safety risks at work. Examples include safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, hearing protection, harnesses and footwear.

In an industrial setting, PPE is considered a last resort where risks cannot be adequately controlled in other ways. This is because it is often the last line of defence against someone being harmed. It also relies on the equipment working properly, being used correctly and being properly maintained.

Occasionally, for some churches there may be a few activities where people may need PPE to complete a task safely. This could be for some types of maintenance work inside your church or for other tasks in the churchyard or car park.

Legal requirements

Generally, if someone is injured you may need to show that you have met your duty of care.

In addition to this, if you are an employer, you must also comply with more specific health and safety laws as well. This includes the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations. Here, you must:

- Provide suitable PPE for employees (and volunteers if you have them) where necessary
- Assess the suitability of any PPE before use, making sure it is fit for purpose
- Provide employees with instructions on how to use it safely

Risk Advice Line

Should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk-related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our Risk Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist.

Alternatively, you can email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

- Make sure that it is used correctly
- Ensure that it is properly maintained and stored.

An employer is not permitted to charge for any PPE provided whether returnable or otherwise.

Hazards to look out for

Some of the typical hazards where the use of PPE might be necessary include:

- Tasks where stones or other flying debris might be thrown up (e.g. when using a strimmer)
- Harmful dusts from cutting stone, wood and some other building materials
- Falling materials or objects from height
- Corrosive liquids that could splash in the eyes
- Chemicals or pesticides used in churchyard maintenance
- Discarded needles and drug paraphernalia
- Hot pots, pans or other plates when preparing food.

Sometimes, the PPE can pose as a potential hazard itself. For example, it may:

- Restrict the wearer by limiting mobility, visibility or ability to grip well
- Alter the wearer's perception of other hazards around them.*

Precautions you can take

Typical precautions include:

- Making sure PPE is suitable and appropriate for the circumstances
- Choosing equipment that suits the wearer (i.e. in terms of size, fit and weight)
- Checking that PPE carries the CE or UKCA mark
- Taking account of the wearer's health (e.g. if equipment is very heavy or wearers have pre-existing health issues)
- Maintaining equipment properly and providing a suitable place to store it
- Providing information and instruction on how to use PPE and how to report defects
- Replacing damaged equipment promptly.*

*This list is not exhaustive.



Making a start

Action

1. Identify all tasks where the use of PPE may be required to protect people from danger.

Guidance

If you are an employer and need to complete formal risk assessments, these will help you identify circumstances where the use of PPE might be required for certain tasks.

Otherwise, the hazards listed above may help you do this. It is not exhaustive and you may need to consider others, depending on your own particular circumstances.

In many small churches, identifying what you need will be a simple task. Usually, it will be limited to a few items needed perhaps for cleaning and gardening. For larger churches, you may have to provide more equipment depending on your own particular circumstances and the tasks involved.

2. Make sure that any PPE you provide is suitable.

If you are an employer, you need to formally assess the suitability of any equipment provided taking into account a range of factors. Further guidance is available at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/index.htm>.

In general, PPE should:

- Protect the wearer from the risks, taking account of where it will be used (e.g. eye protection designed to protect against pesticides may not be adequate to protect against dust)
- Not increase the overall level of risk or add new risks (e.g. by making communication with others more difficult)
- Adjust to fit the wearer correctly
- Reflect the needs of the job (e.g. taking account of the length of time the PPE needs to be worn).

Further advice may be sought from suppliers of PPE, or in particularly difficult cases from specialist sources or from the PPE manufacturer.

3. Make sure people know how to use any PPE properly.

Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals.

If you are an employer, you will need to provide any necessary information and training to your employees (and volunteers if you have them).

This information and training could include:

- The reasons why the equipment is necessary, where it is to be used and what its limitations are
- Instruction on how the equipment is used properly
- Insisting that it is used in all circumstances where required
- Details about how to store the equipment, check for damage, make simple repairs, get a replacement and report any defects in it.

You should check regularly that PPE is being used and investigate incidents where it is not. In some circumstances, you may have to display adequate safety signs.

Making a start

Action

4. Make sure that any PPE is properly maintained and stored.

Guidance

As an employer, you will need to provide appropriate accommodation for any PPE that you provide. You will also need to ensure that any PPE is properly maintained.

In any case, it is sensible to make sure that equipment is:

- Well looked after and properly stored when it is not being used
- Kept clean and in good repair, in accordance with manufacturer's instructions
- Replaced at any recommended intervals, taking account of any 'shelf-life' limits
- Properly maintained, using replacement parts that match the original.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to make sure that suitable replacement PPE is always readily available.

5. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for the use of PPE.

If you have prepared a health and safety policy, record these as part of it.

You can use our Church Health and Safety Policy template if you haven't done this and need one to comply with health and safety law.



Want to know more?

Other useful health and safety information is available at
<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/managing-safety-at-your-church/>

Further guidance and resources are also available at:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/index.htm>

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the Enforcing Agency for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

Need to report an incident involving an injury?

If an incident occurs that may result in a claim for injury, please retain any accident investigation records, e.g. accident book entry, photos etc. and contact our specialist claims team on **0345 603 8381** (Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm) for advice. Where you have received correspondence about a claim being made against you, it is important that you notify us immediately and email a copy to our experts on casualtyclaims@ecclesiastical.com.

Policy cover queries

For queries about your policy cover, call our specialist church team on **0345 777 3322** (Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm, excluding bank holidays) or email us at churchteam@ecclesiastical.com.

Alternatively, please visit www.ecclesiastical.com/church.

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature. It should not be used as a substitute for taking professional advice on specific issues and should not be taken as providing legal advice on any of the topics addressed.



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