

Personal Protective Equipment



This guidance highlights what you should consider in relation to the provision and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

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.

Generally speaking, 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 upon the equipment working properly, being used correctly and being properly maintained. That said, sometimes its use is a necessity.

Although PPE is most commonly associated with environments where workers are exposed to high levels of dust, noise, or hazardous substances, there are many work activities where people may need it to complete a task safely. Examples include some types of maintenance, healthcare and catering work.

Risk advice line

Having read this guidance 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.

For queries about your policy cover or claims please contact your insurance broker.

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 comply with more specific health and safety law 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 (and volunteers if you have them) with instructions on how to use it safely
- 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.

Employers' duties regarding PPE also extend to workers who generally have a more casual employment relationship and work under a contract for service. Further information is available here www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/ppe-regulations-2022.htm.

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 grounds maintenance
- exposure to biological agents
- discarded needles and drug paraphernalia
- hot pots, pans or other plates when preparing food.

Sometimes, the PPE itself might pose a hazard. For example, it may:

- restrict the wearer by limiting mobility, visibility, or ability to grip well
- alter the wearers perception of other hazards around them.*

*Note: this list is not exhaustive

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 wearers 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.*

*Note: 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 upon your own particular circumstances. In many smaller and low risk workplaces, identifying what you need will be very simple and straightforward. Usually, it will be limited to a few items needed, perhaps for cleaning. For larger workplaces, or those where riskier activities are carried out, you may have to provide more equipment depending upon 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 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 do the same for 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, other workers and volunteers if you have them.

This 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 circumstance, 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 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.

Retain records of the notes you have made in the steps outlined above.

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

In the event of a claim, evidence will be important. So, where PPE is used, you should keep suitable records. Examples may include details relating to the assessment of suitability, maintenance, test and examinations, training provided etc.

Want to know more?

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

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.

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.



Proudly part of the BENEFACT GROUP 