

# Personal protective equipment: The right working tool



## Takeaways

- PPE is the last **line of defense** protecting employees from a hazard.
- PPE should be chosen based on a **written hazard assessment** ([bit.ly/4b0Hzaa](https://bit.ly/4b0Hzaa)) identifying hazards and gear required for protection.
- PPE should be **inspected at minimum each shift** to ensure it is in good working condition.
- Employees should be trained at **donning and doffing gear to ensure it works**.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is employees' last line of defense against injury and illness. That defense will not work unless it's the appropriate gear. OAR 437-002-0134(1) directs Oregon employers to have a written evaluation of hazards, including documentation and the name of the person who completed it. Once the hazards have been documented, appropriate steps should be taken to engineer, substitute, or manage the hazard through policy. If that cannot be done, personal protective equipment may be the answer.

Employees should be well versed in the below information so they are equipped to keep themselves safe. Remember, PPE does not eliminate the hazard, but rather manages the employee's exposure to the hazard.

- Necessary PPE
- When PPE is needed
- Donning/doffing PPE
- Capacity of the PPE
- Care, maintenance, and lifespan of the gear
- When to replace gear
- How to discard used/contaminated PPE

PPE can include eyewear, clothing, gloves, chaps, footwear, respiratory protection of many types, ear and hearing protection, high visibility clothing items, headwear, and even skin applications such as sunscreen. Most PPE has ratings that apply to qualifying the gear's capabilities and which situations it is designed to protect humans.

At a very basic minimum, employees should:

- Inspect PPE every shift and following any incident that could have damaged the gear
- Know what the gear is protecting them from and how
- Understand proper use of the gear



## Take action (Complete one or more activities as a team)

- What hazards in your work require PPE? Inspect each type of PPE together identifying ways it can fail or be damaged. Where can employees obtain new PPE when needed?
- What markings or ratings must be found on your PPE (for example ANSI Z87.1 or ASTM F1506-08)? What is that communicating to the user? Do you understand the required markings?
- Review each type of PPE worn, how to don/doff it. Last, track how long it takes two volunteers in working conditions to safely put all the gear on.

