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Diocese of Cleveland Facilities Services Corporation

Personal Protection Equipment – When & Where

Before the COVID 19 pandemic arrived on our shores this year most people probably didn't know what PPE (personal protection equipment) meant. Certainly PPE wasn't a topic of discussion sitting around the dinner table at home, but a majority of businesses have always had PPE requirements to protect their employees including those businesses and buildings in healthcare, manufacturing, construction sites, etc. In fact many of these companies not only have had written policy and procedure requirements in place for years, the federal agency OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) has had responsible for enforcing the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act directed towards these businesses. This Act is aimed to ensure that employers provide a safe working environment for their employees. OSHA's requirements can be considered the minimum requirements with some states opting to enhance and make stricter the employer requirements.

In general, employers are responsible for the following:

- Performing a "hazard assessment" of the workplace to identify and control physical and health hazards
- Identifying and providing appropriate PPE for employees
- Training employees in the use and care of the PPE
- Maintaining PPE, including replacing worn or damaged PPE
- Periodically reviewing, updating and evaluating the effectiveness of the PPE program

At the same time employees are required to do the following:

- Properly wear PPE
- Attend training sessions on PPE base on the employee's policy and procedure requirements
- Care for, clean and maintain PPE provide to the employees
- Inform a supervisor of the need to repair or replace PPE

There are basically 8-categories of PPE with each type broken down into types. The categories are:

1. ***Head Protection Equipment*** that includes helmets, hard hats, and bump caps (light weight hard hat) with some headwear coming with a face guard or face shield.
2. ***Hand Protection Equipment*** that includes work gloves with or without arm gauntlets, which are protective sleeve extensions of work gloves.
3. ***Eye and Face Protection Equipment*** that includes safety glasses and goggles with or without over specs (safety glasses or goggles that fit over the user's prescription glasses) and visors above the safety glasses or goggles
4. ***Respirators Equipment*** that include a wide range of devices ranging from breathing apparatus, full face or half mask respirators, powered respirators, protective hoods, and disposal
5. ***Hearing Protection Equipment*** that includes earplugs and defenders, communication headsets, and noise meters along with the application of acoustic foam within the workspace
6. ***Foot Protection Equipment*** that includes safety boots and shoes for various hazards including but not limited to slipping, anti-static and conductive footwear, etc.
7. ***Body Protection Equipment*** that includes life jackets, clothing for specific weather conditions and room conditions, high-visibility clothing, and harnesses based on applications indoors, outside, and submerged below water
8. ***Height and Access Protection Equipment*** that fall-arrest systems, body harnesses, lowering harnesses, rescue lifting equipment, and energy absorber devices attached to specific harness applications

There are **4-levels of PPE protection** starting with Level D Minimum Protection, which does not require respiratory protection and low skin protection. The following list constitutes Level D equipment:

- Coveralls (work uniform)
- Chemical-resistant boots or shoes with steel toe and shank
- Hard hat
- Gloves
- Outer, chemical-resistant boots (disposable)
- Safety glasses or chemical splash goggles
- Escape mask
- Face shield

Level D PPE is required when minimal protection from chemical exposure is needed, the atmosphere contains no known hazards, and work functions preclude splashes, immersion, or the potential for unexpected inhalation of or contact with hazardous levels of any chemicals.

Level C PPE provides less skin and respiratory protection than Level A or B. The following list constitutes Level C equipment:

- Full-face or half-face air-purifying respirator, *National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health* (NIOSH) approved
- Hooded chemical-resistant clothing
- Inner and outer chemical-resistant gloves
- Coveralls
- Boots (outer), chemical-resistant steel toe and shank
- Boot covers: outer, chemical-resistant (disposable)
- Hard hat
- Escape mask
- Face shield

Level B PPE is required when maximum respiratory protection is desired, but the skin/eye hazards do not require Level A. The following constitutes Level B equipment:

- Positive-pressure, full-facepiece SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) or positive-pressure, pressure-demand, supplied-air to full-face piece with NIOSH approved escape SCBA
- Hooded chemical-resistant clothing or total encapsulating chemical suit (not gas tight or vapor tight)
- Inner and outer chemical-resistant gloves
- Outer chemical-resistant boots with steel toe and shank
- Boot covers: outer, chemical-resistant (disposable)
- Hard hat
- Face shield
- Cooling system (ice vest, water/air circulation)

Level B protection is required when the highest level of respiratory protection is needed but a lower level of skin protection is acceptable and a SCBA is required.

Level A PPE is the highest level of protection which can be worn. The following list constitutes Level A equipment:

- Positive-pressure, pressure-demand, full-facepiece SCBA or positive-pressure, supplied-air to full-face piece with NIOSH-approved escape SCBA
- Totally encapsulating chemical-protective (TECP) suit (gas tight or vapor tight)
- Inner and outer chemical-resistant gloves
  Disposable protective suit, gloves, and boots (depending on
- suit construction, may be worn over totally encapsulating suit)
- Coveralls
- Long underwear
- Hard hat (under suit)
- Chemical-resistant boots with steel toe and shank.
- Cooling system (ice vest, water/air circulation)

PPE includes all equipment, even those used to protect individuals against adverse weather conditions, used to protect employees from health and safety risks they might encounter at work, including injuries to the employee from falls, as well as protection of employee's lungs, head, eyes, ears and skin. The hazards addressed by protective equipment include physical, electrical, heat, chemicals, biohazards, and airborne particulate matter.

When it comes to infection control practices most people are now very familiar with the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidelines to prevent becoming sick. Hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers contribute to personal protection although not classified as PPE.

For more on personal safety refer back to our July Asset Management column, "***Is Your Place Safe – A Layman's Security Walk Around"*** for our suggested safety check list to compliment this PPE discussion.

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