

Suit Up for Safety

Wearing the proper clothing and personal protective equipment for each job you do can help protect you from serious injury and even death. Each year, more than 2 million workers suffer serious on-the-job injuries and illnesses. Most personal protective equipment (PPE) may seem bulky and uncomfortable, but you need to have it on before it's too late. So you must know which hazards you may encounter before you work.

HEAD HAZARDS



If you work in an area where there's a possible danger of head injury from impact, falling or flying objects or electrical shock or burns, then you must wear head protection. Hard hats are specifically designed to resist penetration and to absorb the shock of a blow. Ask your supervisor which type of hard hat you need to wear.

RESPIRATORY HAZARDS



If the air in your workplace contains fine particles, sprays, mists or toxic gases, you should wear respiratory protection. Air-purifying respirators filter contaminants out of the air. Supplied-air respirators provide a source of air when there's not enough oxygen. Masks for fumes, dust and particulate can also protect your respiratory system. Talk with your supervisor about which type of respirator you should use.

EYE HAZARDS



If anything in your workplace can fly, splash or drift into your eyes, you need eye protection. Common causes of eye injury when eyes are unprotected include flying objects or particles; splashing liquids and metals; drifting gases, vapors, dusts, powders, fumes and mists; thermal and radiation hazards, such as heat, glare, ultraviolet and infrared rays; lasers; and electrical hazards. Safety glasses, goggles and face shields are designed to protect against impact from objects, irritating substances, chemical and other splashes, extreme heat and many other hazards. Ask your supervisor which type of eye protection you need and when to wear it.

HEARING HAZARDS



If you have to shout to be heard on the job, you're working in noise levels that are high enough to damage your hearing over time, so you need to wear hearing protection. Hearing protection devices, such as earplugs and earmuffs, screen out loud, harmful noises while allowing you to hear what you need to hear. Talk with your supervisor about the correct hearing protection for you.

FOOT HAZARDS



If you work in an area where it's possible that your toes, ankles or feet could be injured by sharp objects, falling objects, impact, slipping, tripping, electrical hazards, chemical spills or heat hazards, then you need to wear foot protection, such as steel-toed boots. Consult with your supervisor to find out which type of foot protection you should wear.

HAND HAZARDS



If your hands are exposed to possible injury from machinery, heat, cold, electricity, chemicals, toxic substances, materials such as metal, wood, concrete, mortar, paint, tools, etc., you need to wear hand protection. The proper hand protection, in the form of gloves, mitts, thimbles, finger cots, hand pads, barrier creams and arm cuffs can protect you from abrasions, cuts, lacerations, punctures, crushing, burns, heat and cold, dermatitis and other injuries. Ask your supervisor which type or types of hand protection you need.