

Teignbridge District Council

Policy on Personal Protective Equipment

1. Statement of Policy

Council employees are involved in a very wide range of tasks and may be exposed to a wide range of hazards and risks. The key tool for deciding if enough is being done in order to achieve adequate control of risks to health and safety is risk assessment and this is dealt with in a separate policy. Where control needs to be improved then an action list should be produced based on the assessed risk.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is useful and important as a control measure. In some cases PPE is the only practicable control measure and in other cases use of PPE is required by law, e.g. Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989. It should, however, be seen in the context of the hierarchy of control and PPE should not be the method of first choice. See the policy on risk assessment for more information on the hierarchy of control.

There are valid reasons for preferring methods of reducing risk other than PPE. Firstly it protects only the wearer and not other people in the vicinity of the work. Secondly it is rarely as effective as one might think and as manufacturers would have us believe. To be fully effective PPE must be a good fit, must be suitably durable and rugged and must be used properly by the wearer. Thirdly it may restrict the wearer in some way, e.g. restricted field of vision with goggles, lack of "feel" with gloves, etc.

Personal protective equipment covers a very wide range of items aimed at protecting various parts of the body, e.g. Kevlar gloves to protect the hands from cuts, safety spectacles to protect the eyes from chemical splashes and small flying objects. PPE includes respiratory protective equipment (RPE) and this in itself covers a wide range of equipment from disposable filtering facepieces to self-contained breathing apparatus.

There is legislation covering this topic. The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 require employers to provide personal protective equipment to employees who are exposed to risks to their health and safety, except where the risk has been controlled by other means which are equally or more effective.

The Regulations also require employers to assess the suitability of PPE *before* choosing it and to ensure that it is maintained in “an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair”. There are further requirements. The employer is required to provide accommodation for PPE when it is not in use. They must also provide employees with information, instruction and training on the risks that the PPE is intended to reduce, the manner in which the equipment is to be used and also any user maintenance requirements. Employers must also take reasonable steps to ensure that PPE is properly used. Employees must use it in accordance with the employers’ instructions, return it to the accommodation after use and report loss or any defect to the employer.

There are requirements for PPE in other regulations, notably those dealing with lead, ionising radiation, asbestos, substances hazardous to health, noise and head protection on construction sites. The Personal Protective Equipment Regulations, regs. 4 and 6-12 (i.e. most of them) do not apply in cases where these more specific regulations apply. Regulation 5, which does apply in all cases, deals with compatibility of PPE where more than one item is required to be worn.

PPE must be provided at no cost to the employee. This is a requirement of Section 8 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This section is of broader application than just PPE and in effect prohibits employer from charging the employee for anything that the employer is legally obliged to provide. Note, employers are quite at liberty to charge for items of clothing that have no protective value in terms of health and safety.

2. Organisation and Arrangements

2.1 Town Clerk

will ensure that :-

- adequate personal protective equipment is provided to employees. The need for PPE should be identified by the general risk assessment (see separate policy);
- the suitability of PPE is assessed before it is purchased;
- employees are given adequate information, instruction and training to enable them to use the PPE correctly and effectively;
- employees have a proper place to keep their PPE;
- any PPE that is provided is properly used
- there is a proper system for maintaining PPE and if necessary for obtaining replacement equipment. This system must be brought to the attention of employees;
- in the case of RPE, other than disposable filtering facepieces, that it is examined and tested at regular intervals. Equipment that is in frequent use should be examined monthly. Intervals should not exceed 3 months and in all cases records should be kept.

2.2 All staff

- must make proper use of any PPE provided;
- must return the PPE after use to any storage provided;
- must report any loss or obvious defect.

2.3 The Health Safety and Welfare Officer

- will, on request, advise line managers on the suitability, selection and use of PPE including RPE;
- will, on request, advise on the nature and frequency of examinations and tests of RPE.

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