

OCTOBER 2008

Health and Safety Specialised Topic Guide S5

Personal Protective Equipment

Issue and Amendment Record

Issue Number	Date	Comment
1	October 2008	First issue

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Preface

The purpose of this guide is to provide a brief introduction, overview and summary of one of the principal health and safety topics which has implications for many of the operations carried out by BMF members. It identifies some particular aspects which need to be taken into account and provides references and links for further information you may require. However a brief guide cannot be definitive or comprehensive, or include the detailed information you might need. Members need to ensure that their own safety management systems adequately address the risks in their own business and are consistent with legal requirements.

These Specialised Topic Guides assume that the reader is familiar with the general principles of managing health and safety as discussed in BMF's 'Guide to Members' and with the associated sector guidance.

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1 Introduction

The use of personal protective equipment comes low down in the in the hierarchy of risk controls. The fact that PPE is required acknowledges that a hazard cannot be removed and that collective measures cannot reduce risks to acceptable levels. PPE should therefore be seen as more a last resort than the prime means of controlling risk. It should certainly not be seen as a substitute for those risk controls further up the hierarchy.

The principal piece of legislation is the Personal Protective Equipment at Work regulations¹. Other legislation deals with PPE for specific risks and should be seen as complementary. The specific risks covered are:

- lead²
- ionising radiation³
- asbestos⁴
- substances hazardous to health (COSHH)⁵
- noise⁶
- head protection in construction⁷

2 Nature of the Hazards

There is a large range of hazards; physical, chemical, or biological, in the modern workplace for which risks are controlled in whole or part by the use of PPE. Examples of these include:

- chemicals
- molten metal splash
- dust
- missiles
- radiation (thermal, light, ionising)
- impacts and penetrations
- abrasion
- cuts and punctures
- electric shock
- infections, diseases or contamination
- gases and vapours
- oxygen deficient atmospheres
- temperature extremes
- weather

This means that the range of equipment available is corresponding large and can provide protection to most parts of the body, external and internal:

- head

¹ Personal Protective Equipment at Work- Guidance on Regulations. HSE approved code of practice L25.

² Control of Lead at Work regulations

³ Ionising Radiation regulations

⁴ Control of Asbestos at Work regulations

⁵ Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations. BMF Specialised Topic Guide S3

⁶ Noise at Work regulations. BMG General Topic Guide G22

⁷ Construction (Head Protection) regulations 1989.

- ear
- eye (glasses, goggles or shields)
- hand/arm
- foot
- respiratory
- whole body

Note that some PPE is essential for saving and preserving life. These include underwater breathing apparatus and fall protection devices.

3 Duties and Responsibilities

Employers and the self employed have the following principal duties:

- provide (free of charge) suitable PPE (see section 5)
- ensure the PPE is properly stored when not in use
- inspect, maintain, test, repair and replace as necessary to maintain performance
- provide information, instruction and training in its use
- ensure the PPE is used as intended

Where an employee's own PPE is permitted to be used this must be subject to a maintenance regime as if it was provided by the employer.

4 Assessing the Need for PPE

The assessment process must address the following issues:

- ensuring that the risks to health and safety could not be avoided by means other than PPE
- defining the required characteristics including taking account of any risk which may be created or exacerbated by the PPE (*for example, use of ear protection may obscure warning signals*)
- compatibility of the chosen PPE with what else must be worn (*for example eye protection and spectacles, or ear defenders and breathing apparatus*)

This assessment can be done as part of the normal risk assessment process.

5 Purchasing PPE

The employer must ensure that whatever is used meets the requirements identified by the assessment.

Part 2 of the PPE approved code of practice provides some basic general guidance on selection and includes the following types of protection:

- head
- eye and face

- hand and arm
- protective clothing (including legs)
- high visibility clothing
- feet
- drowning prevention
- ear
- respiratory protective equipment

The range of activities, hazards, and protection levels required across all industries results in a very large range of PPE being available. PPE must be 'CE' marked and comply with the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations (not be confused with the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations. Appendix 1 provides more information).

There are many British, European and international standards which define the characteristics and performance required.

Many types of PPE are required to undergo certification tests to prove their performance.

The starting point for the purchase of PPE is to have a thorough understanding through the risk assessment process of the level of protection required. Further information on specific types of PPE can be found through the references quoted in section 6.

Reputable suppliers will be able to offer advice on what would be appropriate to meet the needs identified by your risk assessment.

6 Information Sources

The principal information sources referred to in this guide are listed below together with other reference material which members may find useful.

Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992. Free from Office of Public Sector Information website www.opsi.gov.uk.

Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations. Guidance on Regulations. HSE Approved Code of Practice L25. HSE

A Short Guide to the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations. HSE. INDG174. Free from HSE website.

Selecting Protective Gloves for Work with Chemicals: Guidance for employers and Health and Safety Specialists. HSE. INDG330. Free from HSE website.

Selection of Suitable Respiratory Protective Equipment for work with asbestos. HSE. INDG288. Free from HSE website.

BS4275: 1997. Guide to Implementing an Effective Respiratory Protective device Programme.

BS EN 458:2004 Hearing Protectors. Recommendations for Selection, Use, CARE and Maintenance. Guidance document)

BS EN 363:2002 Personal Protective Equipment against Falls from Height. Fall Arrest Systems.

Inspecting Fall Arrest Equipment made from Webbing or Rope. HSE. INDG367. Free from HSE website.

BS 7184:2001 Selection, Use and Maintenance of Chemical Protective Clothing. Guidance.

Preventing Dermatitis at Work: Advice for employers and employees. HSE . INDG233. Free from HSE website.

Selecting protective gloves for work with chemicals: Guidance for employers and health and safety specialists. HSE. INDG330. Free from HSE website.

Cost and effectiveness of chemical protective gloves for the workplace: Guidance for employers and health and safety specialists. HSE. HSG206.

BS 7028: 1999 Eye protection for industrial and other uses. Guidance on selection, use and maintenance.

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Appendix 1

An Introduction to the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002.

These regulations were introduced under consumer protection law and are enforced by Trading Standards departments. They require any persons placing PPE on the market to ensure that:

- it meets basic health and safety requirements (as set out in schedule 2 of the regulations)
- appropriate conformance testing has been carried out and that relevant technical documentation has been retained.
- a ‘CE’ mark is affixed
- when properly used and maintained it will not compromise safety

The regulations state the relevant processes and documentation required for assessing the conformity of PPE of a range of complexity. Some conformity assessment processes will be carried out by Approved Bodies appointed by the Secretary of State or other member state.

A full set of the regulations can be found at <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2002/20021144.htm>

Appendix 2. Examples of PPE issues in the Marine Industry

The BMF Technical Department is committed to sharing experience amongst members in the interests of encouraging adoption across the industry of good standards of safety management and business-efficient solutions to safety issues. We intend to keep these documents up-to-date in the light of members’ experiences and developments in ‘best practice’ and legislation.

Members with specific queries or suggestions for sharing best practices should contact the Technical Department on 01784 473377 , or email www.britishmarine.co.uk