

NASA-LaRC April 1996 Safety News

A Publication of the Office of Safety, Environment and Mission Assurance (OSEMA)

PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Each year 2 million workers suffer disabling injuries at work. Another thing very important is the gradual loss of hearing, eyesight and respiratory health experienced by other workers and yourself gives you the perfect reason to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on the job.

KNOW YOUR HAZARDS

Many of us are unaware of the dangers in our work environments. As we know accidents happen fast, and we don't notice the effects of cumulative hazards until it's too late to do anything about them. Below are some facts about some hazards the workplace and what you can do to protect yourself.

UNSAFE AIR

If you work in a place where the air contains fine particles, sprays, mists or toxic gases, you should be wearing a respirator. Air-purifying respirators filter contaminants out of the air, while supplied-air respirators provide a source of air when the air around you does not contain enough oxygen. One thing we seem to forget is that a lot of occupational health problems do not occur overnight, they are long-term problems, such as lung problems.

EYE HAZARDS

If your workplace has anything that can fly, splash or drift into your eyes, you need eye protection on the job. There are several types of eye protection available, safety glasses, goggles and face shields are designed to protect against impact from large objects. There are other hazards that the proper eye protection can help. Irritating fine dust, chemical splashes (always unexpected!) extreme heat and other hazards are a few that you must select the proper eye protection.

NOISE

Noise is one of those hazards we mentioned earlier that happens over a long period of time. It is easy to get accustomed to a certain noise and disregard it everyday. If you work in an area where you have to shout to be heard you may be in a work environment in which you need hearing protection. Contrary to popular belief ear protection is designed to screen out the loud damaging noise while it allows you to hear the speech range frequencies. Your basic devices are ear plugs and muffs, or a

combination of both. These can safely and comfortably reduce ear danger and lower your stress on the job.

"BODYGUARDS" FOR EXTREME HAZARDS

Some workers work in extreme hazardous conditions and in this case the job of the PPE is to seal you off from the hazard completely. When using this type of PPE it takes training to properly wear and use it. Whether the PPE is gloves, boots, suits with built-in gloves and boots you must select the proper item for the hazard you are trying to avoid. Some of the PPE used in this type of environment is disposable, eliminating the tricky problem of decontaminating the safely.

OTHER PHYSICAL HAZARDS

Most of the available equipment to protect you from the physical hazards seem bulky and uncomfortable until that time comes when you really need them. At that time you remember the saying, "hind sight is 20/20" and it is too late. So the next time you think these steel-toed boots, chemical-resistant gloves, hard hat, eye and face protectors and coveralls just doesn't match what I wore today, think again and see, hear, smell, and feel how much better you will look tomorrow with all your parts and all your senses with you!

CHECKLIST FOR PPE USERS

1). Check for leaks, tears, signs of wear before each use. 2). Wear PPE properly. Ask your supervisor if you're not sure. 3). Use the right size! 4). Keep equipment clean (decontaminate when necessary) 5). Follow strict guidelines for removing contaminated PPE. And 6). Report any health problems while using PPE.