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WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN SOURCING PPE

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is an essential part of ensuring the safety and well-being of employees. Whether you are in construction, healthcare or manufacturing, it is important to devote time and money to securing the right PPE.

However, finding the right equipment can be challenging. There is a dizzying array of options available on the market, the guidelines are subtly different for every industry subset and there are misconceptions saturating the web that make finding accurate advice tricky.

Here is a step-by-step guide on how to source PPE for a particular industry, site, or task, go over how to judge the quality of PPE ahead of committing to a purchase, and share with you where reliable information can be found online to direct your inquiries.



01 Identify the hazards unique to you

Before sourcing PPE, identify the hazards present in your workplace for the specific task at hand. This will help determine the appropriate PPE to use.

If you have multiple jobs that need different kinds of PPE, you can conduct a job hazard analysis (JHA). This involves breaking down each individual job into its basic components to better identify the hazards associated with that specific job.

02 Determine the level of protection needed

After identifying all the hazards your employees are facing, you need to determine the level of protection those hazards demand. This will depend on the severity of each risk, and the amount of exposure time.

03 Consider comfort and fit

When selecting PPE, consider the comfort and fit of the equipment. If the PPE is uncomfortable or ill-fitting, employees may be tempted to wear it improperly or even remove it entirely. Both will significantly increase the risk of injury and/or illness in an incident.

04 Look for recognizable signs of quality

Always look for PPE that meets the relevant safety standards. Remember, these safety certifications are only meaningful if they are set by an official regulatory body, such as OSHA, ANSI or NFPA.

Quality PPE should be available in different sizes to ensure the correct fit for every wearer. One-size-fits-all is often a sign of poor quality.

05 Don't fall for common misconceptions or mistakes

Here are some common mistakes managers make when sourcing PPE:



Choosing PPE based on cost and not suitability:

Lower cost generally means lower quality, which means the PPE will wear out faster, is less likely to be worn correctly and may not be fit for purpose – which leads to higher likelihood of incident or illness and thus, higher costs.



Not involving workers in the selection process:

Part of any JHA should include speaking with employees to learn how they will use their PPE and what needs must be met. This conversation should include any relevant PPE training or instruction for staff and managers.



Thinking that PPE is a substitute for engineering or administrative controls:

PPE is the last line of defense, and it is essential to implement other control measures to reduce hazards whenever possible.

06 Determine what works best for your team

A manager should continually evaluate the effectiveness of the PPE they are providing their workers with and be flexible in adapting to meet changing or newly uncovered needs.



Sourcing PPE is a critical aspect of ensuring the safety of workers. By following the steps outlined in this guide, you can identify hazards, determine the level of protection needed, consider comfort and fit, look for recognizable signs of quality, avoid common mistakes and misconceptions and determine what works best for your team.

Remember, investing in quality PPE is an investment in the safety and well-being of your employees, which is always worth it in the end.

Learn more about hazard perception and prevention by downloading our free JHA eBook.

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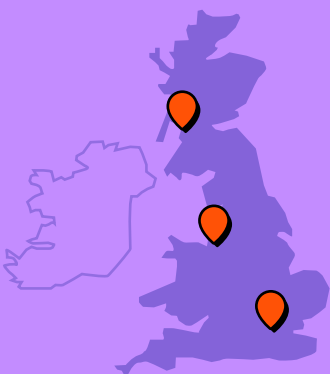




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