

**England, Scotland and Wales**  
The Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002 and the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (as amended) give the main requirements.

**Northern Ireland**  
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Other special regulations cover hazardous substances (including lead and asbestos), and also noise and radiation.

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# Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Employers have duties concerning the provision and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) at work.

PPE is equipment that will protect the user from health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. It also includes respiratory protective equipment (RPE).

## Why is PPE important?

Even where engineering controls and safe systems of work have been applied, some hazards might remain. These hazards could cause injuries to:

- The lungs
- The head and feet
- The eyes
- The skin
- The body

PPE is needed in hazardous situations to reduce the risk.

## What do I have to do?

- Only use PPE as a last resort.
- If PPE is still needed after implementing other controls, you must provide it to your employees free of charge.

You must choose the equipment carefully and ensure that employees are trained to use it properly, and that they know how to detect and report any faults.

## Selection and use

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is exposed and to what?
- How long are they exposed for?
- How much are they exposed to?

When selecting and using PPE:

- Choose products that are CE marked in accordance with the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002; suppliers can advise you.
- Choose equipment that suits the user—consider the size, fit and weight of the PPE. If the users help choose it, they will be more likely to use it.
- Instruct and train people how to use PPE properly. Tell them why it is needed, when to use it and what its limitations are.



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- If more than one item of PPE is being worn, make sure they can be used together. For example, wearing safety glasses may disturb the seal of a respirator, causing air leaks.
  - Never allow exemptions from wearing PPE for those jobs that 'only take a few minutes'.
  - Check with your supplier on what PPE is appropriate for a particular job.
  - When in doubt, seek further advice from a specialist advisor.

## Maintenance

PPE must be properly looked after and stored when not in use. If it is reusable it must be cleaned and kept in good condition.

You should also consider:

- Using the right replacement parts that match the original.
- Keeping replacement PPE available.
- Who is responsible for maintenance and how it is to be done.
- Having a supply of appropriate disposable suits that are useful for dirty jobs where laundry costs are high.

Employees must make proper use of PPE and report its loss or destruction and any faults they find in it.

### Monitor and review

- Check regularly that PPE is used. If it isn't, find out why not.
- Safety signs can be a useful reminder that PPE should be worn.
- Take note of any changes in equipment, materials and methods—you may need to update what you provide.

### Types of PPE

There are a number of different types of PPE for different workplace hazards that can cause injury to various body parts. These hazards and the PPE that can be used to protect against them are listed in the following sections.

## Eyes

### Hazards

Chemical or metal splash, dust, projectiles, gas and vapour, radiation

### Options

Safety spectacles, goggles, face screens, faceshields, visors

### Notes

The eye protection chosen should fit the user properly and have the right combination of protection from impact, dust, splash and molten metal for the task.

## Head and neck

### Hazards

Impact from falling or flying objects, risk of head bumping, hair getting tangled in machinery, chemical drips or splash, climate or temperature

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### Options

Industrial safety helmets, bump caps, hairnets and firefighters' helmets

### Notes

- Some safety helmets incorporate or can be fitted with specially designed eye or hearing protection.
- Don't forget neck protection, such as scarves for use during welding.
- Replace head protection if it is damaged.

## Ears

### Hazards

Noise—a combination of sound level and duration of exposure; very high-level sounds are a hazard even with short duration

### Options

Earplugs, earmuffs, semi-insert/canal caps

### Notes

- Provide the right hearing protectors for the type of work, and make sure workers know how to fit them.
- Choose protectors that reduce noise to an acceptable level, while allowing for safety and communication.

## Hands and arms

### Hazards

Abrasion, temperature extremes, cuts and punctures, impact, chemicals, electric shock, radiation, vibration, biological agents and prolonged immersion in water

### Options

Gloves, gloves with a cuff, gauntlets and sleeving that covers part or all of the arm

### Notes

- Avoid gloves when operating machines such as bench drills where the gloves might get caught.
- Some materials are quickly penetrated by chemicals; take care in selection. Visit HSE's skin at work website: [www.hse.gov.uk/skin](http://www.hse.gov.uk/skin)
- Barrier creams are unreliable and are no substitute for proper PPE.
- Wearing gloves for long periods can make the skin hot and sweaty, leading to skin problems. Using separate cotton inner gloves can help prevent this.

## Feet and legs

### Hazards

Wet, hot and cold conditions, electrostatic build-up, slipping, cuts and punctures, falling objects, heavy loads, metal and chemical splash, vehicles

### Options

Safety boots and shoes with protective toecaps and penetration-resistant, mid-sole Wellington boots and specific footwear, such as foundry boots and chainsaw boots

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### Notes

- Footwear can have a variety of sole patterns and materials to help prevent slips in different conditions, including oil- or chemical-resistant soles. It can also be anti-static, electrically conductive or thermally insulating.
- Appropriate footwear should be selected for the risks identified.

## Lungs

### Hazards

Oxygen-deficient atmospheres, dusts, gases and vapours

### Options – respiratory protective equipment (RPE)

- Some respirators rely on filtering contaminants from workplace air. These include simple filtering facepieces and respirators and power-assisted respirators.
- Make sure it fits properly, especially tight-fitting respirators (filtering facepieces, half and full masks).
- There are also types of breathing apparatus which give an independent supply of breathable air, such as fresh-air hose, compressed airline and self-contained breathing apparatus.

### Notes

- The right type of respirator filter must be used as each is effective for only a limited range of substances.
- Filters have only a limited life. Where there is a shortage of oxygen or any danger of losing consciousness due to exposure to high levels of harmful fumes, only use breathing apparatus—never use a filtering cartridge.
- You will need to use breathing apparatus in a confined space or if there is a chance of an oxygen deficiency in the work area.

## Whole body

### Hazards

Heat, chemical or metal splash, spray from pressure leaks or spray guns, contaminated dust, impact or penetration, excessive wear or entanglement of own clothing

### Options

Conventional or disposable overalls, boiler suits, aprons, chemical suits

### Notes

- The choice of materials includes flame-retardant, anti-static, chain mail, chemically impermeable, and high-visibility.
- Don't forget other protection, like safety harnesses or life jackets.

## Emergency equipment

Careful selection, maintenance and regular and realistic operator training is needed for equipment for use in emergencies, like compressed-air escape breathing apparatus, respirators and safety ropes or harnesses.



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## Case Study:

Scenario	The solution
A commercial gardener was using a petrol-driven strimmer to trim undergrowth. He hit a piece of unseen debris, which was thrown into the air and caught him in the eye. He lost the sight in that eye because he was not wearing protective goggles, which was advised in the manufacturer's written instructions for using the strimmer.	Ensure that workers operating strimmers are trained to recognise the hazards posed by unseen debris and wear appropriate PPE, including protective goggles.

