Personal Protective Equipment

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Introduction
Examples of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) include ear muffs, respirators, face masks, hard hats, gloves, aprons and protective eyewear. This guideline supports the university procedure Managing Workplace Health and Safety Risks by outlining the recommended practices for the utilisation of PPE, including correct selection, supply, use, replacement, maintenance, training and storage.

The use of PPE as a lower level control measure for safety risks under the hierarchy of controls is described in the approved WHS Code of Practice How to manage work health and safety risks. PPE relies on human behaviour and supervision. If used on its own, or only in conjunction with administrative control measures, it tends to be least effective in minimising risks. PPE limits exposure to the harmful effects of a hazard but only if worn and worn correctly.

PPE should only be used:
- when there are no other practical control measures available (as a last resort)
- as an interim measure until a more effective way of controlling the risk can be used
- to supplement higher level control measures (as a back-up).

The use of PPE should be integrated into the systematic management of the hazard/risk being addressed.

Guideline
The need to provide PPE is determined from the risk management process of hazard identification, risk assessment and development of risk control measures using university forms available in support of the university procedure for managing workplace health and safety risks.

PPE are to conform to any legislative, Australian Standard and/or industry standard requirements or guidelines. A list of standards relevant to PPE is provided at the end of this guideline. As new standards are often introduced and existing standards are regularly reviewed and updated you should visit Australian Standards Online to check what standards are current before referring to a standard.

PPE items should be purchased from suppliers who ensure that only approved (Australian Standard or equivalent marking) PPE will be provided and include the following services:
- advice on PPE
- information relating to any test results
- advice on personal fitting, use, cleaning, maintenance and storage of PPE
- a range of sizes (where appropriate)
- information on the availability and need for replacement parts
- demonstration of the PPE
- immediate replacement of any defective PPE.

Consideration shall be given to the need for protecting persons who are working nearby or passing close to hazardous areas.

When is PPE needed
PPE has to be worn in the following scenarios (for example):
- Head protection in the form of a safety helmet shall be worn where, there is a possibility that a person may be struck on the head by a falling object, a person may strike his/her head against a fixed object, or there may be inadvertent head contact with electrical hazards.
- Eye protection shall be provided where a risk of eye injury exists. Typical hazards might include flying particles, dust, splashing substances, harmful gases, vapours, aerosols, and high intensity radiation from welding operations or high-powered lasers.
Hearing protection shall be provided where a risk of noise induced hearing loss exists. The need for hearing protection shall be assessed from the conduct of noise surveys in potential noise hazard areas.

Respiratory protection shall be provided, after all other practicable measures have been taken to provide control measures, to ensure that no staff member is exposed to an atmosphere that is or may be injurious to health.

Protective clothing and sunscreen shall be provided for staff who are required to work outdoors and are exposed to the sun's rays for continuous periods in a day. Direct exposure of the skin to UV radiation from outdoor work shall be minimised by providing hats, long sleeves/trousers and an adequate supply of sunscreen.

Hand protection shall be provided where there is an identified hazard associated with a potential for hand injury. A list of hazards shall be compiled for each workplace and suitable hand protection obtained to minimise risk.

Protective footwear (safety footwear) shall be provided where the nature of the work exposes the employee to a medium to high risk of injury to feet, eg occupations such as workshop/maintenance and gardening staff.

High visibility safety vests shall be provided and worn where there is a risk of injury associated with working on or near roadways or near moving traffic or moving plant.

Compliance with local requirements to use PPE by individual(s), including staff, students, visitors and volunteers should be monitored. Where there is non-compliance this shall be investigated to ascertain the reason(s) and handled in accordance with human resources or student management procedures.

**PPE within workplace risk management programs**

All University workplaces shall address the proper use of PPE where identified as a control measure in their risk management programs, outlining:

- approved PPE items and where they shall be worn
- who is required to wear it and whether it is provided for general or exclusive use
- the type of PPE that students are required to provide themselves for practical studies or fieldwork
- how PPE will be issued
- the initial and ongoing training and instruction needed
- specific precautions that apply, eg cleaning/replacement
- replacement arrangements
- who is to clean and/or service the PPE
- signage required at the point of required use
- what supervision will be provided
- what regular inspections of PPE are necessary
- storage arrangements.

All staff required to use PPE shall be provided with training or instruction prior to use and ongoing training/instruction where necessary.

**University Resources**

For further advice on managing risks in university workplaces, including procedures, guidance, forms and training courses, please visit the Safety & Wellbeing website.

- WHS Procedure - Managing Workplace Health and Safety Risks
- WHS Procedure - Safe Management of Chemicals
- WHS02 - General Risk Assessment
- WHS12 - Chemical Process Risk Assessment & Control
- WHS41 - Plant & Equipment Risk Assessment

**References**

The use of PPE is described in a wide range of codes and standards applying to the management of particular work health and safety risks. To ensure you are referring to the correct and most up to date publications you should visit the following websites.

SafeWork SA Resources—WHS legislation and Approved Codes of Practice:

- Work Health and Safety Act 2012
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
- How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks
- Managing Risks of Hazardous Chemicals in the Workplace
Managing Risks of Plant in the Workplace
Managing Noise and Preventing Hearing Loss at Work
Confined Spaces
Welding Processes.

Australian Standards online (UniSA subscription)
- AS1319: 1994 Safety signs for the occupational environment
- Standards Australia SAA HB9: 1994 – Occupational personal protection
- AS/NZS 1269.3: 2005 Occupational noise management – hearing protection program
- AS/NZS 1270: 2002 Acoustics - Hearing protectors
- AS/NZS 1336: 1997 Recommended practices for occupational eye protection
- AS/NZS 1337: 2010 Personal eye protectors - Eye and face protectors for occupational applications
- AS/NZS 1338: 2012 Filters for eye protectors
- AS/NZS 1715: 2009 Selection, use and maintenance of respiratory protective devices
- AS/NZS 1716: 2012 Respiratory protective devices
- AS/NZS 1801: 1997 Occupational protective helmets
- AS/NZS 1891: 2007 Industrial fall-arrest systems and devices
- AS/NZS 2161: 2008 Occupational protective gloves
- AS 2225:1994 Insulating gloves for electrical purposes
- AS 3765:1990 Clothing for protection against hazardous chemicals
- AS/NZS 4399: 1996 Sun protective clothing - Evaluation and classification
- AS/NZS 4453.3: 1997 Protective Clothing for users of chain saws – Protective leg wear
- AS/NZS 4543: Protective devices against diagnostic medical X-radiation