**Introduction**

The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 places a duty on an employer to ensure that suitable personal protective equipment is provided to their employees who may be exposed to a risk to their health & safety whilst at work, which cannot be adequately controlled by other means, that are equally or more effective.

To accommodate the diverse range of activities undertaken by KCC employees and contractors who work on behalf of KCC, each manager and each of our partner/contracted organisations must have their own procedures in place for ensuring that the requirements for these regulations are fulfilled.

This guidance has been written to give direction for all KCC staff members who are required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to undertake some or all of their duties. The general guidance applies to all staff within KCC but has appendices which are service specific.

**Definitions**

* PPE - all equipment (including clothing which provides protection against the weather), intended to be worn or held by a person at work and which protects them against one or more risks to their health and/or safety
* engineering controls – are means, methods or systems designed to guard or protect against a specific hazard.

**Scope**

When considering what activities take place and who may require PPE, managers must consider and have sufficient knowledge of:

* all routine and non-routine activities (e.g. maintenance operations, loading and unloading)
* any equipment which is controlled or provided for an employee to use in the workplace (e.g. hammers, ladders, photocopiers, motor vehicles)
* any equipment owned or used by employees, agency workers, volunteers or the self-employed that requires PPE to be available and worn
* all workplaces and groups of staff, including lone workers, cleaners, night staff, contractors, agency staff, volunteers, visitors and members of the public.

**The why, what and how**

PPE should always be regarded as a last resort, meaning that other control measures should be considered first. There are a number of reasons for this line of thinking; firstly PPE only protects the person wearing it, whereas controlling the risk at source can protect everyone in the workplace and because the effectiveness of PPE can easily be compromised (e.g. by not being worn properly)**.** The level and type of PPE required will therefore depend on the risks inherent with the tasks involved.

In order for the correct type of PPE to be chosen, the different types of hazards in the workplace must be carefully assessed. A risk assessment will enable managers to determine the most appropriate PPE for the tasks to be undertaken. (Detailed factors to consider are listed in frequently asked questions).

Managers must ensure that they and the employees and any volunteers carrying out hazardous work activities are aware of the risks they face and have received adequate information, training and instruction to allow them to use and maintain the particular equipment safely and correctly. Adequate records must be kept.

All PPE users are required to use the equipment in the way they have been trained; to co-operate with others and to take reasonable care of themselves and anyone who may be affected by their actions. Anyone who feels risks are not being controlled should report this to their line manager.

Where any equipment is lost, defective or time expired, inform your line manager in the first instance to arrange for replacement items.

These regulations do not cover corporate wear or uniform because these items do not specifically protect the health and safety of the wearer. Managers may need to consider whether corporate clothing would compromise the protection afforded by PPE.

Further guidance must be sought with regard to the provision of PPE which may be required where regulations such as Asbestos at Work, Noise at Work, Control of Lead at Work and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations are relevant.

**General information**

Before choosing any PPE a risk assessment is required to determine whether the PPE that will be provided is suitable for the task in hand. There are a number of factors that should be taken into account:

* the job itself and the risks for which protection is needed
* the environment, including surrounding conditions, the weather if working outside, heating, noise etc
* the person, including the health of the person and its ergonomic effects on the employee Some staff may be allergic to the materials. Heavy or bulky suits can cause thermal comfort problems.

The aim is to choose PPE that will give maximum protection and minimum discomfort - uncomfortable equipment is unlikely to be worn properly, if at all.

Most PPE is provided on a personal basis, however it may be shared for example: where it is only required for limited periods. Where required it may need to be decontaminated to ensure that there are no health risks to the next person using it. Different sizes may be required as one size will not fit all.

The regulations require that all PPE purchased must be CE marked. If staff identify that any of their PPE is not CE marked they should return for replacement as soon as practicable.

It is against the law to charge any employee for the provision of PPE used at work.

If a staff member terminates their employment with KCC they are obliged to return all PPE issued to them (with the exceptions of safety shoes).

If agency staff are being employed, consideration must be made in the contract of who will be supplying the suitable PPE to allow them to undertake the task safely. As the client we should seriously consider supplying the appropriate PPE and offer training in how to use it appropriately, excluding safety footwear, which should be provided by the agency staff member. This footwear must meet with the BS EN ISO 20345 standard or BS EN ISO 17249:2004 is the standard for chainsaw footwear. If the contract states that PPE will be provided by the agency / staff member then checks must be undertaken to ensure that it meets with the appropriate standards required for the task.

**Frequently asked questions**

**What is considered as ‘PPE’?**

PPE is all equipment (including clothing which provides protection against the weather) intended to be worn or held by a person at work and which protects them against risks to their health or safety. It includes things like safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high–visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. Waterproof clothing is regarded as PPE only if its use is necessary to protect employees against adverse weather conditions that could affect their health or safety.

**I need to use more than one piece of PPE, what do I need to do to ensure they are compatible?**

If more than one item of PPE is being worn, the different items must be compatible with each other and when worn together should adequately control the risks. For example certain types of half-mask respirator and goggles worn together can prevent one or both items from fitting correctly, leading to increased risk of eye injury and or respiratory exposure. This should be identified within the risk assessment process.

**How do I accommodate, maintain & replace my PPE?**

Appropriate storage should be available for PPE when not in use. It is recommended that PPE is not stored in direct sunlight or subjected to excessive heat as this can cause damage.

All PPE has a shelf life beyond which it may not provide the level of protection for which it was originally designed. PPE should be regularly examined by the user, heavily soiled or damaged PPE may be deemed unfit for use or past its protective life and should be disposed of and replaced. It is the responsibility of the user to check their PPE at least once a week and to seek a replacement immediately.

The small markings on safety helmets indicate a date of manufacture. Although most manufacturers will suggest a 2-3 year replacement policy, in some instances a 5 year lifespan may be appropriate. If helmets are stored appropriately and do not experience environmental extremes, the shelf life of a helmet is not limited. Their life span therefore is generally based on how it has been used and stored.

Users should regularly inspect both the helmet shell and the inner harness for signs of wear and tear. Deep abrasions or scuff marks, cracks or damage to the harness means it should be replaced immediately.

Unless damaged – Highways, Transportation & Waste safety helmets will be replaced 4 years from its manufacture date. (These regulations DO NOT cover cycle helmets or motorcycle crash helmets).

**Who is responsible for information, instruction & training to staff?**

Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff receive adequate information, instruction and training in how to use PPE in accordance with the manufacturer instructions. Further guidance is available from Health and Safety advisers if required.

**Who should have a first aid kit?**

First Aid kits should be issued to all staff who work away from their normal base on a day to day basis; to be used for self-administered first aid. Employees are required to ensure that the contents are replenished and updated on a regular basis.

**Do I require hearing protection?**

It is unlikely that KCC staff will be exposed to high levels of noise for significant periods of time, however where this is the case a noise risk assessment will need to be undertaken.

If you feel that you are exposed to undue levels of noise please contact your health and safety adviser who will arrange for noise monitoring to be undertaken. Hearing protection will be issued based on the results of a risk assessment.

**Do I need to report lost or defective equipment?**

Staff have a responsibility to take reasonable care of the PPE that they have been provided with. If PPE has been lost or damaged it must be reported as soon as possible and for replacement to be obtained before recommencing work. Under no circumstances should staff start work if they do not have the appropriate PPE for the task.

**Who needs to undertake audits?**

Managers will be required to monitor the usage of PPE at regular intervals. This will include ensuring that employees and agency staff continue to carry and use PPE issued to them, that it is in serviceable condition and that staff are aware of when and how to replace old and damaged PPE. A PPE issuing form is provided and should be kept locally by Managers and be available on request for auditing purposes. (Appendix A).

**Where can managers get health and safety help and advice?**

Health and Safety Advisers are available to assist you with carrying out your responsibilities. Help is also available from a number of individuals or departments e.g. Staff Care Services (Occupational Health), Total Facilities Management, Gen 2 and Trade Unions. A Health and Safety Adviser will assist you and inform you if more specialist help is required.

**What is adequate training’?**

You need to make sure all users of PPE are aware of:

* why the PPE is needed and the risks it will avoid
* when and how it is to be selected, used, stored, repaired, maintained and replaced
* its limitations and the factors that will affect the protection it provides
* how to recognise defects and report them.

Because PPE is the last resort after all other methods of protection have been considered, it is important that users wear it all the time they are exposed to the risk. Never allow users not to wear or use it, for those jobs that ‘only take a few minutes’.

**When is training necessary?**

Training needs are likely to be greatest for new staff when they are recruited. Training will also be needed:

* if the risks to which people are exposed change due to a change in their working tasks
* because new technology or equipment is introduced
* if the system of work changes.

Managers should provide refresher training if and when necessary.  Skills decline if they are not used regularly.  Pay particular attention to people who deputise for others on occasions, as they may need more frequent refresher training than those who do the work regularly.

**When and how do I carry out regular maintenance?**

Equipment needs to be well looked after and be properly accommodated when not in use (stored in a dry, clean cupboard, or - in the case of smaller items, such as eye protection - in a box or case). It should be kept clean and be fit for use.

The manufacturer’s maintenance schedule (including recommended replacement period and shelf life) should normally be followed.  Simple maintenance can be carried out by the trained wearer, but more intricate repairs should only be done by specialist personnel. Suitable replacement PPE should always be readily available.

KCC requires a maintenance log to be kept. This can be a simple paper record for lower level risk equipment or a more structured system for high risk.  Advice should always be sought from your allocated health and safety adviser.

Maintenance procedures should be carried out in accordance with any manufacturer’s recommendations relating to the equipment. The person carrying out the maintenance should be competent and have the necessary knowledge and experience.

**Why should I carry out inspections?**

The purpose of an inspection is to identify whether or not the PPE can be used, adjusted and maintained safely and so that any deterioration (such as defects, damage, wear and tear) can be detected and put right before it causes unacceptable risk(s).)

**What should be included in the inspection?**

The extent of the inspection required will depend on the potential risks. Inspections should include, where appropriate, visual checks and testing. The extent of the inspection that is needed will depend upon:

* the type of PPE
* where it is used
* how it is used.

**How do I select suitable PPE?**

All PPE must be selected from products bearing the European Standard mark “CE”. The “CE” mark signifies that the PPE satisfies certain basic safety requirements. Once suitable PPE has been selected, manufacturers and suppliers are required to provide advice and information to ensure the PPE can provide the protection needed.

When considering the suitability of PPE, managers need to consider the following factors:

* is it appropriate for the risks involved and for the conditions at the place where people may be exposed to the risks? For instance, eye protection designed to provide protection against pesticides will not offer adequate face protection for someone using an angle grinder to cut steel or stone
* does it prevent or adequately control the risks involved without increasing the overall level of risk?
* can it be adjusted to fit the wearer correctly? Physical differences in size as well as those individuals who wear spectacles or have facial hair will need to be considered as this may affect the level of protection required
* has the health of those who will be wearing it been taken into account?
* what are the needs of the job and the demands it places on the wearer? Things to consider include the length of time the PPE needs to be worn, the physical effort it takes to do the job and the need for visibility and communication
* if more than one type of PPE is being worn, are they compatible? As an example, make sure that the type of respirator chosen does not make it difficult to get eye protection to fit properly.

**How do I know what PPE is available?**

You need to speak with your line manager to find out which is the most suitable equipment for you to carry out your job safely. Please see PPE selection table (Appendix B) or visit the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website for further advice.

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| Employee Name |  |
| Line Manager |  |
| Date of PPE Training |  |
| General information | All PPE issued to individuals must be recorded on this register. The register will be audited on a frequent basis to confirm all PPE issue is currently in date. Dates of expiry shall be determined unsing the original equipment manufacturers (OEM) recommendations. All PPE shall be maintained according to the OEM requirements and training provided on its use. |

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| **Equipment** | **PPE item/details** | **Date issued** | **Expiry Date** | **Training Provided** | **Signature** |
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| **Review Date** |  |  |  |  |

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| **Part of body requiring protection** | **Types of hazard** | **Choice of PPE** |
| Eyes | Chemicals or metal splash; dust or wood particles; gas and vapour; radiation. | Spectacles, goggles, face screens/shields; eye shields; welding filters. NB Safety spectacles can be fitted with prescription lenses if required. Some eye protection can be worn over ordinary spectacles if necessary. |
| Head and neck | Impact from falling or flying objects; risk of bumping head; hair entanglement. | Crash helmets; safety helmets; bump caps; hats; caps; sou’westers and cape hoods; skullcaps; hairnets. |
| Breathing | Dust; vapours; gas; oxygen-deficient atmospheres. | Disposable filtering face piece or respirator; half/full face respirator; air-fed helmets; breathing apparatus. |
| Hands and arms | Abrasion; temperature extremes; cuts and punctures; impact; chemicals; electric shock; skin infection; disease or contamination; vibration. | Gloves; gauntlets; mitts; wrist cuffs; armlets. |
| Feet and legs | Wet; electrostatic build- ups; slipping; cuts and punctures; falling objects; metal and chemical splash; abrasion. | Safety boots and shoes (with steel toe caps and steel midsoles); gaiters; leggings; spats; Wellington boots; anti-static/ conductive footwear. |
| Body | Temperature extremes; adverse weather; chemical or metal splash; spray from pressure leaks or spray guns; impact; contaminated dust/fibres; excessive wear or entanglement of own clothing. | Conventional or disposable overalls; boiler suits; donkey jackets; specialist protective clothing e.g. chain-mail aprons, trousers, sleeves; high-visibility clothing; wet weather clothing. |

When choosing your PPE or RPE you need to consider at the risk assessment stage the most suitable equipment and grading of the item. For example a dust mask may not be suitable for the task and an FFP1, 2 or 3 mask may need to be considered.