

How to Select the Most Effective PPE for Your Construction Team

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Construction workers put themselves in harm's way on a daily basis – whether they're working high above the ground, handling hazardous materials like asbestos or lead-based paint, or operating heavy machinery. For these courageous individuals, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) is a crucial safety measure to protect workers and reduce onsite accidents and injuries.

As a construction leader, you can do your part to promote workplace safety by selecting high-quality PPE that meets safety standards and keeps your workers safe. Here's some practical guidance for choosing the best PPE for your crews.

How PPE Encourages Construction Safety

There are several reasons why the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) mandates PPE use on construction sites. From hard hats that protect against falling objects to respiratory equipment that filters out dangerous dust, this gear provides a line of defense against common site hazards.

The essential role of PPE in safeguarding workers cannot be overstated: Without such protection, construction workers are significantly more prone to injuries, illnesses, or worse. In fact, research shows that 70% of fall incidents occur due to a lack of PPE. Furthermore, construction workers who fail to wear PPE are three times more likely to suffer injuries than those who do.



Given the high stakes, it's incumbent upon business leaders to take PPE requirements seriously. Yes, compliance means avoiding costly penalties and fines. But more importantly, choosing the right PPE means protecting their most valuable assets – the hardworking employees and contractors who get their hands dirty daily on the jobsite.

Typical Hazards on Construction Sites

Each construction project presents unique risks depending on the nature of the work – for example, building construction exposes workers to different hazards than roadwork. According to research published by the National Center for Biotechnology

Information, construction workers are at a higher risk of injury due to the dynamic nature of the work environment and the variety of tasks they perform.

Therefore, leaders must carefully evaluate each project and conduct thorough risk assessments for each jobsite to understand the dangers their teams will face. Common perils may include:

- » Falling objects
- » Chemical spills or exposure
- » Exposure to airborne contaminants
- » Loud noises related to drilling or demolition work
- » Electrical hazards

Once you've identified the most likely risk exposures, you can make informed decisions about the types of PPE your team needs.

Tips for Choosing the Right PPE for Different Construction Tasks

Keeping workers safe and complying with rules and regulations are excellent objectives to have when selecting PPE. However, it's equally important to consider the fit, comfort, and suitability of PPE for each jobsite task.

HEADGEAR

Nearly all construction environments require hard hats for head protection. Even in the absence of falling debris – a common construction hazard – there's always the possibility of slips, trips, and falls, making hard hats essential.

EYE AND FACE PROTECTION

Construction tasks like grinding, drilling, cutting, or working with hazardous chemicals demand proper eye and face protection to prevent serious injuries. Whether it's flying debris, sparks, or chemical splashes, workers must use face shields or goggles specifically designed to shield them from these dangers. Without adequate protection, workers risk permanent eye damage or even blindness, making this gear critical on any jobsite.

EAR PROTECTION

Noisy environments involving heavy construction or demolition call for earplugs or earmuffs to protect workers from potential hearing loss. Effective hearing protection is essential in reducing the risk of long-term harm and ensuring your project teams can safely continue their tasks without distraction from excessive noise.

RESPIRATORY SAFEGUARDS

Respirators or face masks are critical in environments with dust, dirt, fumes, chemicals, or other airborne contaminants. Workers should wear respiratory protection appropriate for the job. Face protection can range from N95 particulate masks that protect the lungs from airborne particles to air-purifying respirators for those trained and medically cleared to wear them.

PROTECTION FOR HANDS AND FEET

Steel-toed boots and heavy-duty gloves are nonnegotiables to protect workers from sharp objects, falling debris or equipment, and electrical hazards.

PPE FOR UNIQUE RISKS

Certain jobs may require even more specialized forms of PPE. For example, workers who do their jobs from up above the ground may need fall-protection equipment.

Those who handle chemicals or other hazardous materials may require specialized suits. Again, match the PPE with the task to ensure complete protection.

Key Considerations When Selecting and Using PPE

When selecting PPE, look for long-lasting, durable workwear that's both functional and flexible. It needs to be sturdy enough to withstand tough environments yet comfortable enough to wear for extended periods. Investing in high-quality PPE ensures greater longevity and protection for construction teams while promoting consistent use. Additionally, check that PPE meets OSHA safety standards. Staying up-to-date on the latest regulations will help you maintain compliance and avoid costly penalties.


As you introduce PPE to your workers, take the time to train them on the proper way to wear hard hats, masks, and other protective equipment. Protective gear should fit well without being too tight or restrictive. If workers wear more than one type of PPE, the various types shouldn't interfere with each other – for example, hard hats should allow for properly fitting earmuffs.

A regular inspection schedule is vital to check for signs of wear or damage, so you can promptly replace items that have become overly worn. Also, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for PPE cleaning, care, and maintenance.

Building a Safer, Stronger Team With Effective PPE

The more you build safety into your processes, the more confident your crew will be in doing their work. When you prioritize your team's well-being with proper PPE, you'll have a much happier, safer crew. Plus, you'll reduce your liability and ensure compliance with OSHA guidelines.

The added benefit of a more satisfied workforce is often greater employee retention. By showing employees you care about their best interests, you can become an employer of choice and build a positive reputation in the industry.

Outfitting your team with effective PPE might sound like a daunting task, given the risks involved. However, the rewards are worth the effort. By scrutinizing site-specific risks, pairing the PPE with the task, and checking for durability and proper fit, you can protect your workers while creating a culture of safety. 



About the Author

Nick Warrick is the sales manager at [All Seasons Uniforms](#). With over 15 years of experience in the work uniform business, he has worked with over 100 clients across 20 different industries. Holding bachelor's degrees in both business administration and information technology, Warrick revamped the company's online presence, offering its customers a new uniform shopping experience.

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