

Is PPE an Effective Form of Risk Management?

In a word, no.

Risk management is an ongoing process that businesses use to identify, assess and treat all risks that could potentially affect the health and safety of workers and others. Personal protective equipment (PPE) forms just a small part of risk management in the workplace.

What is PPE?

PPE is clothing, equipment or substances worn by someone to protect them from risks of injury or illness. However, it is only one step in the process of managing risk. It is essentially designed to minimise exposure to a hazard (ex. signs outside of hazardous work sites, ear muffs, protective eye wear).



Is PPE effective?

PPE does limit exposure to the harmful effects of a hazard, but only if it is worn and used correctly.

It is the least effective method of controlling a safety risk and should be combined with other measures, because it doesn't control the hazard at the source.

Basically, it should only be used as a last resort when there are no other practical options available, until a more effective method can be found or as a back-up to higher-level measures.

Who is responsible for providing PPE?

Management must ensure the worker is provided with all necessary PPE, and must not charge a worker for its provision.

That being said, there may be circumstances where this is open to negotiation. In making this decision, one should consider equipment availability, whether equipment can be used outside of work (ex. sunglasses, boots), the need for a personal fit and/or the requirements in the relevant industrial award/enterprise agreement regarding PPE provision.

How do I choose appropriate PPE for my employees?

You must ensure that the PPE provided is:

- *Suitable to the nature of the work and any related hazards*
- *Suitable in size/fit and reasonably comfortable for the worker who is to use or wear it*
- *Maintained, repaired or replaced to ensure it is in good working order, and clean and hygienic*
- *Used/worn by the worker so far as is reasonably practicable.*

Do my employees need PPE training?

Yes. All workers must be provided with information and instruction in relation to safe usage, storage and maintenance of the PPE.

What are the employees' responsibilities with regard to PPE?

Employees must use it in accordance with the information and instruction provided.

Employees must also not intentionally misuse or damage the PPE and needs to inform management of any damages, defect, or cleanliness/decontamination issues he/she may have with the PPE.