

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

As described in the [Sector Brief - Responsibility & Accountability](#), your organisation has a legal obligation to provide and maintain a safe environment for your volunteers, customers, and visitors. Fundamental to achieving this obligation is the management of safety risk and putting in controls to reduce those risks. This can include providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

You should:

1. Identify and Assess Risk [See Sector Brief - [Managing Safety Risk](#)].

When identifying hazards and assessing risks in your workplace and operational areas, you need to consider not only the working environment, but other introduced hazards, like electrical appliances, chemicals, plant and machinery, working at heights and in confined spaces (includes fireboxes and smokeboxes).



NOTE

Consider PPE as a last choice defence control, (*not a first line of defence - pursue elimination, substitution or engineering out the requirement of exposure to the hazard as a preferred choice wherever possible, or So Far As Is Reasonably Possible - SFAIRP*). Invariably, effective risk management requires a combination of strategies and PPE may be an adjunct to higher level controls to reduce risk.

Where PPE is a control strategy, the risk assessment must state the:

- tasks for which the PPE will be required
- locations at the workplace where the PPE will be required
- factors which will influence the selection of PPE.

Specifying a minimum level of PPE for all persons is helpful as part of your site safety plan, (e.g. robust footwear) and determining a policy of PPE towards visitors and contractors. You should always have, or develop policies that apply to, visitors and contractors to your workplaces. Visitors and contractors should always be included in your risk assessments.

2. Select Correct PPE

PPE is selected to control remaining (residual) risks and should be procured with due consideration and consultation with those workers/stakeholders who will be most affected if the PPE is not

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effective enough. Consideration should also be given to provision types of disposable PPE required for personal use, e.g. ear plugs. In any case, it is of fundamental importance that PPE:

- Is appropriate to the work tasks and worksite conditions
- Fits the individual if it is produced in more than one size
- Complies with relevant legislation, Australian Standards, and Codes of Practice.
- Is trialled and tested to determine the most suitable type to match the hazards and user requirements.

Not all sector organisations are able to supply all workers/volunteers with PPE, and so when allowing/requiring volunteers to provide their own PPE, it may be necessary to set a minimum standard for personal/volunteer supplied PPE.

3. Provide PPE To Those Who Need It

PPE is selected to control remaining (residual) risks and should be selected with due consideration and consultation with those workers/stakeholders who will be most affected. Consideration should also be given to provision of disposable PPE required for one off personal use only, e.g. ear plugs. In areas of exposure to higher risks (e.g. noisy or dusty environments), workers should have ready access to the relevant PPE.

4. Ensure Your Volunteers Use and Maintain Their PPE Correctly

It is important that all workers understand the necessity of maintaining all PPE in a clean and fit-for-purpose condition. The very nature of the purpose of PPE means that they are worn in areas where they can become damaged, contaminated or develop reduced effectiveness over time.

5. Complete Required Inspection and Review Of PPE

To ensure that selected PPE remains suitable for the purposes required, pre-use inspection and review of the PPE should be completed to ensure continued protection for workers.

Where volunteers provide their own PPE, it may also be necessary to review the condition and suitability of an individual's personal PPE to ensure their continued safety.

6. Store PPE Correctly

For PPE to remain effective, it must be stored in a safe and sustainable location and still be readily accessible when required.

7. Training Vouchers Volunteers In PPE

For PPE to be fully effective, all workers and managers should understand the need for PPE to be used in a proper and sustainable manner. Some PPE is simple to use and briefing workers in their use should be straight forward. Other types of specialised PPE (breathing apparatus, etc.) may need more specialised training or instruction.

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8. Introducing New PPE Safely

Where changes are made to the requirement to use or the type of PPE, a consultative approach

KEY LEARNING

- Risk management is fundamental to achieving your legal obligation to provide and maintain a safe environment, PPE can form a key strategy.
- PPE should be the last mechanism used to control the risk, see Hierarchy of Controls in Sector Brief – [Managing Safety Risk](#).
- PPE should be appropriate. Consider; effectiveness, user's needs, fit, impact on working practices.
- PPE should be provided where possible, or specified where a volunteer provides their own.
- You should monitor that PPE is being used correctly
- PPE should be inspected (by the user) prior to use and replaced if required.
- Defective PPE should not be used.
- PPE should be stored so as not to cause damage.
- PPE should be easily accessible when it is required.
- Training should be provided, covering the requirement of when to use PPE, it's inspection and correct use.

should be made to ensure that users and other stakeholders are included.

If you have more questions or queries, contact:

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