

8 - Personal Protective Equipment: Safety Training

EH&S – MGA

Goals: This safety session should teach you that:

- A. Many OSHA standards require employers to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect employees from job-related injuries, illnesses, and fatalities.
- B. In most cases, the employer must pay for required PPE. However, there are exceptions.

OSHA Regulations: 29 CFR 1910.132 and 1926.95.

1. The general provision regarding PPE requires employers to provide PPE when necessary to protect employees.

- A. The provision states that the PPE must be provided, used, and maintained in a sanitary and reliable condition.
- B. Some OSHA standards specifically require the employer to pay for PPE, especially where the item is used only on the job.
- C. When employers purchase PPE, they often retain ownership and have the right to control the use of the PPE.
- D. They can set rules about whether the PPE can be used only on the jobsite.
- E. They may require the employee to return the PPE if they terminate employment, but they are not allowed to charge for wear and tear related to the work performed or workplace conditions.

2. Employers must pay to replace PPE on a regular basis.

- A. This duty is considered part of the employer's obligation to be sure that the PPE is in good condition.
- B. The only exception to the rule about paying for replacement is when the employee has lost or intentionally damaged the PPE.

3. The employer is not required to pay for a few specific items.

- A. Non specialty safety-toe protective footwear (including steel-toes shoes or steel-toe boots) that the employer allows to be worn off the job.
- B. Non specialty prescription safety eyewear that can be used off the job.
- C. The logging boots specified in the OSHA logging standard.
- D. Shoes or boots with built in toe-guard protection that the employee chooses instead of shoes and boots with built in toe guards provided by the employer.

4. The employer is not required to pay for everyday clothing or items designed to protect the employee from weather.

- A. These are not considered PPE.
- B. Examples of everyday clothing include items such as long-sleeve shirts, long pants, street shoes, and normal work boots.
- C. Weather-related items mentioned by OSHA include winter coats, jackets, gloves, parkas, rubber boots, hats, raincoats, ordinary sunglasses, and sunscreen.

5. In addition, where an employee owns adequate PPE and is allowed to use it, the employer is not required to reimburse the employee for that equipment.

- A. Often, newly hired workers report to the workplace with PPE they own.
- B. This practice occurs in many industries but seems to be found more frequently in workplaces that use short-term labor.
- C. OSHA makes it clear, however, that employers cannot avoid their obligations by requiring employee ownership of PPE as a condition of employment.

6. OSHA encourages employers to consider offering a selection of PPE to their employees as a “best practice” to improve their health and safety programs.

- A. Where proper fit is an important consideration, employers may have to provide a variety of sizes to protect all their employees properly.
- B. In some cases, employers may offer several choices of basic PPE, but workers may prefer a particular type because of special features or style.
- C. In such instances, some employers may give a set allowance toward the worker’s selection, as long as the PPE is adequate to protect the worker.
- D. If the employee makes a more expensive choice, he or she is responsible for the extra cost.

Summation:

PPE is just what its name says. It is equipment designed to protect each and every worker from injuries and illnesses in the workplace. To do its job, it must be used correctly, cared for properly, and replaced when necessary. The most important rule applies to the every worker: Use required PPE **every time**.