

Personal Protective Equipment Using the Correct Equipment for the Task

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is designed to protect employees from workplace injuries or illnesses resulting from contact with chemical, radiological, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other workplace hazards. Besides safety glasses and safety shoes, PPE includes a variety of devices and garments such as goggles, face shields, coveralls, gloves, vests, ear plugs, and respirators.

While PPE is essential, it is considered your last line of defense when engineering controls, work practices, and administrative controls are not feasible, or do not provide sufficient protection. For example, use PPE if it's not feasible to reduce exposure by:

- Physically changing the equipment or work environment (i.e. engineering control);
- Changing how someone would perform their job, such as scheduling or job rotation (i.e. administrative control);
- Training employees to perform tasks in ways that reduce their exposure to workplace hazards (i.e. work practices).

Northwestern's commitment to your safety is supported by the development of a PPE program that involves assessing your work areas to determine if hazards are present that require the use of PPE. Risk Management Services offers PPE Assessments that assist in identifying hazards and the appropriate



equipment for your work area or tasks. PPE that fits properly has a greater chance of being worn by employees; as such, managers and supervisors should include employees in the selection process when possible.

It is also important to understand PPE has limitations, such as instances when certain movements are restricted, dexterity and vision are affected. Employees must maintain their PPE by inspecting and cleaning their personal protective equipment before and after each use, and immediately replacing any damaged or defective equipment.

Lastly, Northwestern's PPE program includes attending training that covers: knowing when PPE is required, how to put on, take off and adjust your PPE, and proper care, maintenance and the limitations of your equipment. Talk to your supervisor, manager or Risk Management supervisors about PPE training.



Kyle Zanon, EHS Specialist, wearing PPE before visiting Mudd Library

Below are some tips on how to set yourself up for safety when wearing PPE:

- **PPE doesn't last forever:** Worn out PPE may not provide the proper protection and can become a hazard. Replace PPE when it shows visible signs of wear.
- **PPE only protects you when you're wearing it:** Even the most expensive, highest quality PPE will not protect you if it's not your body and worn properly.
- **Follow safety procedures while wearing PPE:** No piece of PPE will protect you against every workplace hazard, it is essential stay safety focused and follow safety procedures.
- **Do your part:** Personal Protective Equipment Training will be available on April 10, 2017 at myHR.northwestern.edu.

Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

- **Preparation is Key:** Keep the topic relevant to your work. With your team, review PPE commonly used in your department and discuss each section and how it applies to your work.
- **Stay Positive:** Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.
- **Share a Story, Ask for a Story:** Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

Safety at Home

Safety doesn't work in shifts. It should always be on our minds even when at home. To protect you and your family, consider these safety tips:

- Nearly half of all eye injuries happen at home. From flying wood chips to cutting grass, our eyes are at risk not only on the job; always use safety glasses when working at home.
- Some of the most familiar sounds of the season (lawnmowers, snow blowers, power tools, etc.) can produce more noise than the typical work place. Just like at work, we need to keep our hearing safe. Use ear plugs or muffs, just like you would at work.
- When working with household chemicals, such as bleach or ammonia, always wear gloves to protect yourself, your family.

For Additional Information

Please contact [Gwen Butler](mailto:Gwen.Butler@northwestern.edu), Director of Environmental Health and Safety, at 847.491.4936 with any questions. Risk Management Services can be reached at 847.491.5610 or risk@northwestern.edu.