



OSHA's Personal Protective Equipment Standard

Many Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards require employers to provide personal safety equipment, such as respirators and hard hats, when necessary to protect employees from job-related injuries, illnesses and fatalities. OSHA's personal protective equipment (PPE) standard, revised in October 2009, mandates that general industry, construction and maritime employers must provide all required PPE at no cost to employees, with several exceptions as outlined below.

Who Pays for PPE

For general industry, construction and maritime employers, PPE required by the standard must be provided by the employer at no cost to employees. Employers must pay for replacement PPE, except when the employee has lost or intentionally damaged the PPE.

To accommodate employees who frequently move from job to job, the final rule acknowledges that employees may use their own equipment if the employer allows them to do so. In these instances, the employer is not required to reimburse the employees for the PPE.

However, employers cannot require employees to provide their own PPE or to pay for their own PPE. To qualify: (a) employee use of PPE must be completely voluntary, (b) employer must ensure equipment meets standard requirements and is properly maintained, and (c) employee must be able to adopt the use of employer-provided PPE at any time.

Replacement PPE

Employers must pay for replacement equipment, unless the employee has intentionally damaged or lost the gear.

Exceptions to Standard

- Employers are not required to pay for ordinary safety-toe footwear (including steel-toed shoes or steel-toed boots) if the employer allows the employee to wear them off the job site.

- Employers are not required to pay for ordinary safety eyewear that is allowed to be worn off the job site.
- Employers are not required to pay for shoes with built-in metatarsal protection as long as the employer provides and pays for metatarsal guards that attach to the shoes.
- The general industry logging standard does not require employers to pay for logging boots required for the job, but it leaves the responsibility for payment open to employer and employee negotiation.
- OSHA recognizes that there are certain circumstances where long-sleeve shirts, long pants, street shoes, normal work boots and other similar types of clothing could serve as PPE. However, the final rule excludes everyday clothing from the employer-payment rule.
- Employers are not required to pay for ordinary clothing used solely for protection from weather, such as winter coats and gloves, sunscreen or sunglasses. In the rare case that special equipment or extraordinary clothing is needed to protect the employee from unusually severe weather conditions, the employer is required to pay for such protection. *Note: Clothing used in artificially controlled environments with extreme hot or cold temperatures, such as freezers, is not considered part of the weather-related gear exception.*

Details of OSHA's PPE Standard

- Protective equipment, including PPE for the eyes, face, head and extremities, protective clothing, respiratory devices and protective shields and barriers, must be provided, used and maintained in sanitary and reliable condition. This applies when:
 - Hazards exist relating to processes or environment, chemical hazards, radiological hazards or mechanical irritants
 - When those hazards are capable of causing injury or impairment in the function of any body part through absorption, inhalation or physical contact
- When employees provide their own equipment, the employer is responsible for assuring its adequacy, including proper maintenance and sanitation.
- All PPE shall be of a safe design and construction.
- Employers are responsible for assessing the workplace to determine if hazards are present, or are likely to be present, that would require the use of PPE. If hazards, or potential hazards, are found, the employer should:
 - Select and enforce the use of proper PPE that will protect the affected employees from the specific hazards identified in the hazard assessment.
 - Communicate selection decisions to each affected employee.
 - Select PPE that properly fits affected employees.
 - Verify that the required workplace hazard assessment has been performed through a written certification. This certification must identify the workplace area evaluated,

the person certifying that the evaluation has been performed and the date(s) of the hazard assessment.

- Ensure that defective or damaged PPE is not used.
- Provide training to each employee who is required to use PPE. Each employee should know the following: (1) When PPE is necessary, (2) What PPE is necessary, (3) How to properly use, remove, adjust and wear PPE, (4) The limitations of PPE, and (5) The proper care, maintenance, useful life and disposal of PPE.
- Each affected employee should demonstrate an understanding of training and the ability to use PPE properly before being allowed to perform work.
- When an employer has reason to believe that any affected employee (already trained) does not understand or have the skill required to use PPE, the employer should retrain such employee. Circumstances where retraining is required include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Changes in the workplace that make previous training obsolete.
 - Changes in the types of PPE that make previous training obsolete.
 - Inadequacies in an affected employee's knowledge or use of assigned PPE indicating that the employee has not been trained properly.