

# YOUNG WORKERS FACT SHEET

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

### WHAT IS PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)?

PPE is clothing or equipment designed to control risks to health and safety in the workplace.

It includes:

- eye protection (goggles, safety glasses)
- hearing protection (ear plugs, ear muffs)
- breathing protection (respirators, face masks, cartridge filters)
- foot protection (safety boots)
- head protection (hard hats, helmets, sun hats)
- body protection (high-visibility garments, thermal wear, overalls, aprons, safety harnesses)
- substances used to protect health (sun screen)
- outer wear (reflective vests, fluoro jackets).

PPE is the least satisfactory solution to health and safety problems in the workplace, as it does not address the hazard – it only provides a shield to protect the worker.

PPE should therefore be used in addition to other control measures that provide workers with a higher level of safety, rather than replacing those measures.

### WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

By law, you must cooperate with your employer's health and safety requirements.

That means that if your employer requires you to use PPE, you must use it. If you refuse to wear or use your PPE, your employer can take disciplinary action and you can face prosecution.

It is not your responsibility to pay for or supply PPE. However, if it is supplied, you must not interfere with, mistreat or misuse it.

Tell your employer if the PPE becomes damaged, broken or defective in any way. Also, if the PPE is uncomfortable or does not fit properly, speak to your manager.

If you see someone not using PPE when they should be, warn them of the risk they are taking and immediately tell your manager.

As your employer supplies (and owns) the PPE, you may have to return it if you leave your workplace.

## WHAT DOES MY EMPLOYER HAVE TO DO?

Your employer must provide you with PPE where it is necessary to ensure your health and safety at work.

It is an offence for your employer to charge you for any safety equipment.

If your employer requires you to use PPE, they must provide you with adequate instruction and training.

Your employer must also ensure that the PPE is provided in a clean and hygienic condition, and is properly maintained and repaired.

A risk assessment will show whether PPE is necessary. If your employer doesn't have a written risk assessment, get them to contact WorkCover for advice.

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For more information on PPE or for specific advice on your workplace situation, call WorkCover on 13 10 50 or visit our website at [www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au)

### Disclaimer

This publication may contain occupational health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website ([www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au)) or by contacting the free hotline service on 02 9321 3333.

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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