

## Personal Protective Equipment

1. Employees are exposed to a number of potential hazards in the workplace such as chemicals, temperature extremes, excessive noise and falling objects.
2. OSHA recommends preventing a hazard at the source of the problem by improving working practices (employee training or education).
3. Personal protective equipment (PPE) protects an employee against a direct hazard, like gloves for chemical or extreme temperature contact, or earmuffs for workers exposed to extended or extreme noise.
4. Employers should be aware of the OSHA standard PPE Title 29, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1910.132 and should implement a PPE program.
5. The program should include training and educating employees on the requirements, the use of PPE in the workplace and correct PPE use.

### Related Examinetics Services

- Hearing Conservation Programs
- Respirator Clearance - Questionnaire Only
- Respirator Fit Test - Qualitative
- Respirator Fit Test - Quantitative
- Respirator Clearance

### Overview

Employees can be exposed to a number of potential hazards in the workplace such as chemicals, temperature extremes, excessive noise, falling objects and sharp edges. Under the General Duty Clause Section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act, employers are required to ensure that their workers are safe from harm at their place of employment and take the necessary precautions to prevent accidents from happening. OSHA recommends that preventative measures should occur at the source of the hazard such as engineering controls, improving working practices, or administrative controls.

### Protecting your employees

Personal protective equipment (PPE) refers to any equipment provided to employees that protects them against direct contact with a known hazard. Employees working in extreme temperatures with harmful chemicals should wear hand-protecting gloves and, where appropriate, full body suits. These items are made with specialist materials appropriate for the hazard. For example, noise reducers such as earmuffs should be worn by those working in areas of extended or extreme noise; hard hats should be worn by workers exposed to falling objects, electrical conductors or fixed objects; full face shields or goggles should be worn to avoid facial injuries or damage to the eyes from dangerous chemicals, sparks, flying objects or chippings; leg shields and safety boots provide protection against sparks, electrical hazards, molten metals and slippery surfaces; and a respirator must be worn by employees working with harmful sprays, dusts, vapors or volatile chemicals. For more information, read the excellent booklet entitled 'Assessing the need for Personal Protective Equipment – a guide for small business employers' by OSHA under the 'Business Owner Briefing' link in the adjacent panel.

### Regulatory issues

The OSHA standard 'PPE Title 29, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1910.132' requires employers, after undertaking a 'hazard assessment' of the workplace, to implement an effective PPE program. The program should outline the measures that will be taken to try to control the hazard at its source (eg. engineering administrative or work practice controls). Once those options have been exhausted, the relevant PPE should be identified for those still exposed to any hazards. Employees should also be provided with training and education in relation to the need for PPE and how to use PPE effectively.