

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Toolbox Talk

Select PPE for the hazard and the individual, confirm that it fits and works with other gear, inspect it before use, and stop if it is damaged or cannot provide the intended protection.

English safety review completed by Ben Sleeman, Credentialed safety reviewer; professional US construction-Spanish review completed by Ben Sleeman, Credentialed safety reviewer.

READ ALOUD (ABOUT 5 MINUTES)

Personal protective equipment protects us only when four things are true: it matches the hazard, it fits the person, it is in reliable condition, and it is worn the way it was designed. PPE is not permission to work through an uncontrolled hazard. We first eliminate or isolate the hazard where we can, use engineering and work-practice controls, and then use PPE for exposure that remains. If the right equipment is unavailable, does not fit, is damaged, or conflicts with other gear, the task does not start.

Begin with today's task, not with a standard outfit. Ask what can strike, cut, puncture, burn, splash, enter the lungs, damage hearing, contact the body electrically, or contribute to a fall. Ask how the exposure can reach the worker and what has changed since the last time the task was done. Basic site gear may be necessary, but it may not cover the specific operation. For detailed grinding, cutting, flying-particle, or splash protection, use the Eye and Face Protection talk. Required respirators, hearing protection, fall-arrest systems, and head protection also have task-specific standards and procedures that this general talk does not replace.

Select equipment for the actual exposure and read its markings, instructions, and limitations. A cut-resistant glove is not automatically chemical-resistant. A chemical glove must be compatible with the product identified in the safety data sheet and the manufacturer's selection information. An ordinary work boot is not the same as suitable protection for prolonged contact with wet concrete. A particulate respirator does not protect against every gas or vapor; when respiratory protection is required, the employer's respiratory protection program governs selection, medical evaluation, fit testing, and use. Never modify PPE or assume that one model protects against every hazard.

Fit is part of protection, not just comfort. OSHA's current construction standard, 29 CFR 1926.95(c), expressly requires PPE to be selected so that it properly fits each affected employee. Equipment that is too large can slip, leave gaps, obstruct vision, or catch on equipment. Equipment that is too small can leave skin exposed, restrict motion, or prevent correct adjustment. Put on all gear that will be worn together and check that one item does not break another item's seal, move it out of position, or block safe movement. Ask for another size or model when necessary; do not improvise with holes, knots, removed parts, or unauthorized tape.

Inspect PPE before putting it into service. Look for cracks, cuts, tears, stretched or damaged straps, missing hardware, worn soles, contamination, damaged seals, illegible markings, and any service-life or change-out indicator that applies. Follow the manufacturer's inspection and replacement instructions and any task-specific OSHA rule. Do not make a field repair unless the manufacturer and employer authorize it. Remove questionable equipment from service so another worker cannot pick it up. Even when a worker supplies personal equipment, 29 CFR 1926.95(b) leaves the employer responsible for assuring its adequacy, maintenance, and sanitation.

Use, clean, and store the equipment as directed. Keep protective surfaces and seals clean, and do not carry contamination into a break area, vehicle, or home. Report impact, chemical contact, unusual wear, loss, or a fit problem immediately. Recheck the selection whenever the product, tool, process, weather, work position, or other worn equipment changes. PPE that was correct yesterday may be wrong for today's exposure.

Before work begins, every person should be able to answer four questions: What hazard is this item intended to control? Is it rated for that hazard? Does it fit and remain in position while I perform the task? Did it pass inspection? If any answer is no or uncertain, stop and correct it. PPE is our last barrier, and a last barrier only works when every part of the system is right.

INCIDENT EXAMPLE

Documented OSHA incident - wet-concrete chemical burn, April 26, 2004. OSHA Accident Summary No. 201067881 reports that a construction laborer arrived after the pre-pour briefing about wet-concrete hazards. He was given used rain boots belonging to another worker. The boots repeatedly came off; he eventually removed one and continued working in wet concrete up to his calf for about four hours. He did not wash immediately and later required treatment for third-degree burns, skin grafts, and a week in a burn unit. The case demonstrates why task communication, hazard-appropriate equipment, individual fit, supervision, and immediate decontamination must work together.

CREW DISCUSSION

1. What hazards remain after the higher-level controls for today's work?
2. Does anyone's PPE slip, gap, pinch, obstruct vision, or interfere with another item?
3. Where does damaged or contaminated PPE go, and who issues a replacement?

CONTROLS TO COVER

- Review the task and remaining exposure before selecting PPE; use higher-level controls first.
- Select equipment rated for the hazard and compatible with every other item being worn.
- Provide the correct size and model for each worker; stop when proper fit cannot be achieved.
- Inspect before use and after an impact, contamination, or other event that may affect protection.
- Remove damaged or questionable equipment from service; clean, store, and replace it as directed.
- Reassess PPE when the task, material, tool, environment, or worker's equipment ensemble changes.

QUICK QUIZ

1. What four checks must PPE pass before work?
It must match the hazard, be properly rated, fit the individual, and be in reliable condition.
2. Does one type of work glove protect against every chemical and mechanical hazard?
No. Select gloves for the specific exposure using the safety data sheet, manufacturer information, and employer procedure.
3. If a worker brings personal PPE, who must assure that it is adequate and maintained?
The employer, under 29 CFR 1926.95(b).

Reference: 29 CFR 1926.28 and 1926.95; hazard-specific requirements in 29 CFR 1926 Subpart E - In its 2024 construction PPE fit-rule analysis, OSHA estimated that 5,878,530 construction employees used some type of PPE, based on 2022 employment data.

Sources: 29 CFR 1926.95 - Criteria for personal protective equipment; OSHA 2024 construction PPE proper-fit final rule; OSHA Accident Summary No. 201067881; NIOSH: PPE fit in the construction sector

Toolbox Talk Sign-In Sheet

Attendance record for the talk above. Reviewers (OSHA, GC, ISNetworld/Avetta) expect topic, date, presenter identity, and attendee signatures.

Project / location

Date and time

Topic: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Toolbox Talk

Presenter (print)

Presenter signature

NAME (PRINT)	COMPANY / TRADE	SIGNATURE

Concerns raised and follow-up actions (owner, due date)