

Information Sheet: Protective Clothing and Footwear

Purpose

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide information on protective clothing and footwear which may be required to further minimise a risk at work. Refer to the [HSW webpage](#) for information sheets on a range of other personal protective equipment (PPE).

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with the HSW [Hazard Management Procedure](#).

Appendix A of the [Hazard Management Procedure](#) explains how PPE is the **least effective** control measure. This is because it is an administrative control, meaning users have to remember to wear it, and PPE does nothing to eliminate or minimise the underlying hazard. For these reasons, higher level controls (e.g. engineering, isolation, substitution and the most effective control, elimination) must first be considered.

In addition to the guidance below, specific requirements for PPE are also outlined in [Approved Codes of Practice](#) pertaining to specific hazards (e.g. noise, hazardous chemicals, abrasive blasting, spray painting, welding, asbestos removal and confined space entry). When managing the risk of such work through applying the [Hazard Management Procedure](#), refer to the relevant [Approved Code of Practice](#) in addition to this information sheet to determine any PPE required.

Q1 When should protective clothing and footwear be considered as a control measure?

Where a risk of injury or illness still remains after all other control measures have been applied, a work area may be able to further minimise remaining risk, by providing and requiring the use of suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent damage to the body. Refer [Work Health and Safety \(WHS\) Regulations 2012 \(SA\), regulation \[36\]](#).

A requirement for the use of PPE may be identified through:

- the supervisor, or person in control of the work area, mandating the use of specific clothing and footwear upon entry to the area as a general precaution such as in a workshop or laboratory, based on a reasonable assessment of the hazards in the area
- a risk assessment for a task or process, such as the use of hazardous chemicals, where specific PPE is required to manage the hazard e.g. goggles, gloves, face shield, hood or respiratory equipment.

Where PPE is identified as required (e.g. through a risk assessment), it must be provided and made available to workers undertaking the activity. Ensuring the use of PPE can be reinforced through inductions to the local area, training on safe operating procedures (SOPs), supervision and spot checks. Where protective clothing and/or footwear is mandatory in an area, appropriate signage (complying with the relevant Australian Standard) should be displayed. Examples of signage appear in [Appendix A](#).

Q2 Do I need to consult with workers on the choice of personal protective equipment (PPE) that they will be required to wear?

Yes. The [Work Health and Safety \(WHS\) Act 2012 \(SA\), sections 47-49](#) requires that workers who are (or are likely to be) directly affected by a health or safety matter are consulted, particularly when making decisions about ways to eliminate or minimise risks. In doing so, workers' views must be taken into account before making the decision. In the context of PPE, this includes to consult with the relevant workers to ensure that the PPE chosen is practicable for the task/activity and that it does not introduce any other hazards for the operators/performers of the task/activity.

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Q3 What types of protective clothing and footwear are available?

Selecting suitable protective clothing and footwear will depend on several factors, including the task performed and the hazards associated with the work. Protective clothing can be categorised as providing protection from:

- hazardous chemicals
 - heat and cold (working in cold rooms, working outdoors in inclement weather)
 - heat/flame hazards (contact with heat, flame, sparks, molten metal splashes)
 - harmful radiation (including ionising radiation)
 - mechanical hazards (entanglement, abrasive objects, cutting by sharp objects)
- biological hazards (e.g. blood).

The protective clothing must be selected as suitable for the nature of the work and the hazards associated with the work. Suppliers of protective clothing are a good source of information on the type and standard of protective clothing appropriate for the task and the hazards associated with the work and whether the product meets the relevant Australian Standard

The protective clothing selected must not create an additional hazard (e.g. dust coats worn near rotating machinery). There are other types of PPE that may need to be considered such as eye protection, hand protection, head and face protection, hearing protection and respiratory protection. Refer to the [HSW webpage](#) for the relevant information sheet.

Q4 What instruction may be needed for protective clothing and footwear?

Where a risk assessment control measure includes the requirement to wear or use protective clothing and footwear, workers must be instructed by their supervisor/manager or the person who is directing the work, on the nature of the work and how to implement the control measures, including the use of PPE.

This should also include the selection of a suitable size, fit and comfort for the individual, prior to commencing the activity. This instruction could be provided during the local induction if the task/activity is conducted on a regular basis or prior to conducting the activity if it is a new task/activity.

For their part, workers must, so far as is reasonably able, use or wear the equipment in accordance with any information, training or reasonable instruction provided. Supervision and regular checks are a good way to ensure local safety rules are followed.

Q5 What are the maintenance requirements for protective clothing and footwear?

Where workers are required to wear protective clothing and footwear, the Faculty/Division/Area is required under [WHS Regulation \[44\]](#), to ensure that the equipment is maintained, repaired and/or replaced so that it continues to minimise the risk to the worker who uses it. This includes ensuring that the protective clothing is clean and hygienic. Refer to the manufacturer’s recommendations regarding any maintenance and care requirements.

Where a maintenance regime for any PPE is required, the [Schedule of Programmable Events \(Safety Calendar Procedure\)](#) must be applied to manage this activity. A pre-use inspection should be conducted to ensure that the protective clothing and footwear is in good working order.

Q6 What are the storage requirements of protective clothing and footwear?

Protective clothing and footwear should be stored to ensure it remains effective and in good order. It should be stored separately from other items, e.g. in a plastic bag. Refer to the manufacturer’s recommendations regarding storage requirements.

Q7 What should I do if I contaminate my protective clothing/lab coat?

Any contaminated protective clothing and/or footwear should be immediately sealed in a plastic bag e.g. autoclave bag, to isolate the contamination. Contact your supervisor to discuss the possibility of decontamination. If decontamination cannot be conducted, dispose of the clothing as waste (in accordance with the type of substance it has been contaminated by).

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Q8 When should protective footwear be worn?

Protective footwear should be worn to reduce injuries to feet resulting from:

- contact with falling, rolling or cutting objects
- penetration through the sole or uppers
- degloving (epidermis pulled away from the feet)
- explosions and electrical hazards
- contact with hazardous chemicals, heat and molten metals
- slipping.

Protective footwear should meet the relevant Australian Standard (see question 8). Suppliers are a good source of information on the type and standard of protective footwear appropriate for the task and the hazards associated with the work and whether the product meets the relevant Australian Standard.

Q9 Where can I obtain further information about protective clothing and footwear?

- The University’s HSW [Hazard Management Procedure](#) outlines the method to select effective risk control measures
- [Australian Standard AS/NZS 2210.1 \(2010\) Safety, Protective and Occupational Footwear, Part 1: Guide to Selection, Care and Use](#)
- Refer to the [HSW webpage](#) for information sheets on a range of other personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Contact [the HSW Team](#) advice on the selection and use of appropriate PPE.

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Appendix A – Examples of safety signs

This is a sample of commonly used safety signs meeting the [Australian Standard AS 1319 \(1994\) Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment](#).

Please consult [Australian Standard AS 1319 \(1994\) Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment](#) or contact [the HSW Team](#) if you require advice on selecting signage.



Gloves Required



Safety Goggles Required



Half-face Respirator Required



Hearing Protection Required



Safety Boots Required



Protective Clothing Required

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