



# elliswhittam

Employment Law / HR / Health & Safety

## How to get your workers to wear PPE



Health & Safety Executive (HSE) prosecutions often involve a failure to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Ensuring your workers are wearing PPE is a vital part of your approach to ensuring the Health & Safety of your staff.

This 5 point checklist gives you all the information you need to ensure your workers wear PPE.

# 1

### Ensure you have a PPE policy



As an employer you have a duty to provide your employees with suitable PPE under the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 2002.

Workers must be given suitable equipment where it's not possible to remove every possible hazard and they remain exposed to harm.

Equipment may include helmets, gloves, eye protection, hearing protection, breathing apparatus, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and harnesses.

It's up to you to write your organisation's PPE policy and decide what your employees must wear. Your decision should be based on risk assessments you've carried out and any previous accidents or injuries.

## 2

### Choose the right PPE equipment



The person buying the PPE doesn't usually wear it and their buying decision tends to be based solely on cost or their own inconvenience.

Avoid problems by involving your workers in the PPE buying decision. Show them any products you are considering. Ideally let them try out different PPE. Ask workers about the limits of any PPE.

PPE is often said to "get in the way". This feeling can be overcome where it fits well and doesn't prevent workers from seeing clearly or moving freely.

Encourage your workers to complain if their equipment doesn't seem right and to ask for something more suitable.



## 3

### Communicate your policy and PPE's importance



Are your confident workers have the right PPE? Do they still seem reluctant to wear PPE? If so, it may be that you're not doing a good enough sales job.

Problems tend to occur when managers impose a PPE policy without adequate consultation or communication.

All that might be needed is to explain the results of not using PPE. The message may be brought home if workers understand:

- why a PPE policy is in place
- how PPE protects them from hazards and potential injuries

It's best to start with the threat to the workers themselves. Younger minds might be better focused using graphic pictures of injuries.

Older workers are more likely to know someone who's been injured or suffered ill health as a result of not wearing proper PPE. Get them to pass on their experience of ignoring hazards.

They should be told that failure to wear the correct PPE could result in your organisation being prosecuted.

If the carrot fails, use your stick! Your organisation should have a mandatory policy on the wearing of PPE. While it should be written into employees' terms and conditions, what really matters is how your policy is implemented.

If simply talking to 'refuseniks' doesn't work, you could:

- use a 'two strikes and you're out' or the 'no PPE - no job' approach
- ban the culprits from working on site

Your final sanction will be dismissal.

# 4

## Spot check employees' use of PPE



PPE is no use if your workers 'forget' to put it on.

Having gone to all the trouble of working out what type of PPE is needed and investing in equipment it must be pretty frustrating to find boots, hats and gloves etc. left in lockers!

You'd think anyone carrying out hazardous tasks would gladly wear PPE. But many workers don't. They put themselves at risk of injury (or even death) as well as your organisation at risk of prosecution.

To overcome this it's important that you regularly spot check employees' use of PPE. Make a habit of visiting sites to routinely ensure PPE is being worn. Where it's not, ensure you have a robust follow-up procedure that seeks to minimise non-compliance.



# 5

## Have a robust disciplinary policy




Employers carry the ultimate legal responsibility for worker failings.

One way of managing employee inaction is to have it in the Contract of Employment. You should make sure your contractual terms and conditions treat failure to follow reasonable Health & Safety instructions as gross misconduct.

You are required to assess the risks associated with work activities and remove or reduce risks to an acceptable level. If your risk assessments identify the need for PPE then it's your duty to supply suitable PPE and to police its correct use.

The quickest way to make sure workers use PPE might be to simply discipline anyone caught without the correct safety gear. But it may be better to try the carrot before the stick.

 0845 226 8393

 /elliswhittam

 @elliswhittam

 /company/ellis-whittam

[www.elliswhittam.com](http://www.elliswhittam.com)

