

Personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) comprises clothing, equipment and/or substances used to protect part or all of the body from foreseeable work-related injury or illness. Depending on the tasks undertaken, staff may require a range of PPE including: sun safe clothing, protective footwear, breathing apparatus, hearing protection, eye protection, sunscreen lotion, hat or gloves.

Duties

Principals/managers and workers are strongly encouraged to work cooperatively to develop guidelines that best meet the needs at their workplace.

Principals/managers

- Under the [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 \(Qld\)](#) a person conducting a business or undertaking must provide personal protective equipment to employees. At a school or DoE workplace, the principal/manager of the site is responsible for the provision and purchase of appropriate PPE.
- To ensure the PPE is used appropriately, the worker needs to be provided with information and instruction on the purpose, correct use, care and maintenance of the PPE.
- Ensure that PPE is worn or used. Monitoring, reminders and ensuring supply of PPE are components of this process. Advice can be sought from the Regional principal human resource consultant regarding support and processes to assist with managing compliance.
- Ensure that PPE is maintained or replaced so it is in good working order and clean and hygienic.

Staff/workers

- After being provided with instruction, workers have a legal duty to wear, and appropriately use all items of PPE ([Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011, part 3.2](#)).
 - For example: Sun safe shirts are items of personal protective equipment (PPE) that protect the employee from UVR exposure. After appropriate instruction, workers have a legal requirement to wear these items when performing outdoor work.
- Ensure that they do not intentionally misuse or damage PPE.
- Inform the principal/manager of any damage to, defect or need to clean, sterilise or replace any equipment.

Where can I find information?

There are a range of sources of information about PPE. The majority of information is provided by the manufacturer and is available at the time of purchase of an item. Sources of information include:

- product packaging
- manufacturer's instruction manuals/websites
- your staff/co-workers e.g. discuss with your staff their regular workplace tasks to determine the risks to be managed and how they are to be managed
- information in the [Health & Safety for Schools Officers Resource Folder](#)
- safety data sheets (SDS).

These information sources will include information on PPE type, standards (e.g. compliance with an Australian/New Zealand Standard - AS/NZS where relevant), care, recommended replacement timeframes and maintenance of PPE.

Choosing appropriate PPE – factors to consider

- PPE should only be used if no other risk control measures can be used.
- PPE is considered the least favourable and effective method to reduce risk when compared to other control options, such as elimination or design controls, however sometimes PPE may be the most appropriate measure e.g. safety boots for foot protection.
- PPE can be used in combination with other risk control measures.
 - e.g. mowing the lawn early in the morning reduces exposure to harmful UV rays and to further minimise the risks schools officers should also wear PPE – sun smart clothing, hat and sunscreen.
- Several types of PPE may be required by one person to control multiple risks.
 - e.g. mowing the lawn; noise (ear muffs), sun (sun safe clothing) and projectiles (safety glasses).
- PPE should be checked to ensure it fits properly, is comfortable and is worn correctly.
 - e.g. earplugs are commonly inserted incorrectly, compromising the hearing protection provided. Sunscreen needs to be regularly reapplied to ensure maximum and constant protection.
- Workers must be trained in the use and maintenance of PPE.
 - e.g. ear muff pads can become hard and brittle and subsequently do not provide appropriate hearing protection – schools officers need information about regularly checking the condition of earmuffs.
- Purchasing PPE – meeting individual needs.
 - A number of factors need to be considered when selecting PPE; e.g. that it manages the identified risks, complies with any relevant standards, competitive cost of the item and comfort for the user.
 - Comfort and ease of use are major factors in ensuring consistent and ongoing use of PPE. PPE is rarely 'one size fits all' so variations of brand and style will suit different individuals. Purchasing should be done in consultation with the staff member to ensure the best fit of PPE and the correct type of PPE is sourced.

PPE can be procured from [Queensland Government Standing Offer Arrangement QGCPO796-10.](#)

Record keeping

A PPE Register recording the following information:

- the date that PPE is issued/replaced
- details of workers to whom PPE is issued or who have their PPE replaced
- the date that information and training is provided (including refresher courses) to ensure the correct use of PPE.

A PPE Register demonstrates that reasonable precautions have been taken and that proper diligence has been exercised in managing the use of PPE at the school. An example is available in the *Health & Safety for Schools Officers Resource Folder*.

More information

- [Health & safety for schools officers resource folder](#) which includes:
 - [Types of PPE – fact sheet](#)
 - [PPE register](#)
 - [Sun smart clothing fact sheet](#)
- [How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks Code of Practice 2011](#)
- Contact Regional [Senior Health and Safety Consultants](#) for health and safety enquiries.