

## The complete guide to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

It's important for every industry to be aware of PPE requirements. Last year saw the PPE Directive 89/686/EEC replaced with Regulation 2016/425 as part of a move to improve health and safety in the workplace. The transition period for putting this regulation in place ends soon, on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2019 — it is crucial therefore that business owners ensure their business is fully compliant at this stage.

Many changes have come into play throughout the UK workplace in general, thanks to new technology and advancements. These new processes have impacted PPE capabilities, and this is reflected in the new regulations. For the construction sector, PPE is a day-to-day necessity and it is important to follow these changes.

The previous PPE directive held a focus on manufacturers — the new regulation considers the entire supply chain as a whole. Any employee that is part of the supply chain at any stage, from construction to distribution, now has a set standard of PPE to meet. [Business wear company](#) Dimensions explains further:

### An overview of the standards set by the new regulation

The main standards set out by the Regulation 2016/425 are as follows:

- Ensuring PPE meets the vital health and safety requirements
- Ensuring technical documentation is in place
- Ensuring a Declaration of Conformity is created with a CE mark (once compliance has been demonstrated)
- Maintain records for ten years
- Sample testing
- Responding to non-conforming PPE with appropriate actions
- Following labelling requirements
- Cooperating with, and providing instructions for, the national authority

It is worth noting that while the transition period comes to an end on the 21<sup>st</sup> April this year, any EC types certificates issued under the previous directive will remain valid until 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023 (unless they have a marked expiry date before this).

### Categories of PPE

There are three main categories of PPE:

- **Simple design — category I:** if workers are presented with minimal risk, this is the category of PPE required. Example items — garden gloves, ski goggles, footwear, etc.
- **Neither complex nor simple design — category II:** these items are more complex than category I, but not as complex in design as category III. Example items — dry and wet suits.
- **Complex designs — category III:** items that protect workers against potentially mortal danger or life-changing injuries fall into this category. Example items — respiratory equipment and harnesses.

## Maintaining PPE compliance among workers

Employers have a duty of care towards their workers, but it's true that getting workers to cooperate with PPE requirements can be frustrating. According to some studies, as many as 98 per cent of employees have seen fellow workers not wearing the correct PPE, and a further 30 per cent admit this is a regular occurrence.

Common excuses for not wearing the supplied PPE among workers include that:

- It makes them too hot
- The garments or equipment were unattractive
- The garments or equipment didn't fit them well
- The garments or equipment were not practical

But wearing PPE is absolutely vital for workers to be safe. Studies show that nine per cent of all injuries at work are head injuries, and 84 per cent of these head injuries were caused by not wearing PPE headgear. 25 per cent of workplace injuries involve fingers and hands, a rate which could be reduced by 60 per cent with the correct safety gloves being worn. 25 per cent of workers are exposed to dangerous levels of sound, but the damage could be reduced by 99 per cent with the correct hearing protection gear. Further figures show 50 per cent of construction workers suffer a serious injury through their career, but by wearing the correct PPE, injury rates could be reduced by 90 per cent.

It's undoubtedly vital that efforts are made to better educate workers on the necessity of PPE, as well as being sure that PPE is comfortable and well-fitting for the workers expected to wear it.

Sources:

[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/mechanical-engineering/personal-protective-equipment\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/mechanical-engineering/personal-protective-equipment_en)

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Author: Georgia White