



## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) – best practice document

Extract from COSHH Approved Code of Practice (L5)

This is the **appropriate standard** against which your health and safety compliance will be assessed in Guernsey. This document is provided to assist employers, self-employed persons, employees and workers to understand their duties in relation to health and safety at work.

### When PPE might be necessary

156 The situations where PPE will normally be necessary include:

- where adequate control of exposure cannot be achieved solely by good practice and the application of operational or engineering measures appropriate to the activity and consistent with the risk assessment. In this case, suitable PPE should be used in addition to those measures to secure adequate control;
- where a new or revised assessment shows that PPE is necessary until adequate control is achieved by other measures;
- where there is temporary failure to achieve adequate control of the process, eg because of plant failure. In this case, suitable PPE should be used as the only practicable solution for reimposing adequate control in the time available;
- where maintenance has to be carried out and the risk of exposure is assessed and appropriate control, such as prior decontamination of equipment and areas, is identified and carried out. In this case, although exposure may occur regularly, its infrequency and the small number of people involved, as well as the difficulties of applying process and engineering controls, often make the use of PPE necessary.

157 In assessing whether the use of PPE is the appropriate option, employers should consider:

- the type and level of exposure to the hazardous substance concerned;
- its effectiveness in the actual work situation;
- the practical difficulties of ensuring its continued correct use;
- the limitations;
- the costs.

### Suitable PPE

158 PPE should control adequately the hazardous substances to which the wearer is exposed, or is liable to be exposed, throughout the time it is used. When selecting PPE it is important for employers to take into account:

- the circumstances in which it will be used, eg the substances to which it will be exposed and for how long, and the degree of protection necessary;
- whether it can resist penetration and permeation by the substance concerned for a specified or recommended period;
- whether the design is adequate and suitable, ie the equipment fits the wearer, does not dislodge, deform, melt or otherwise fail to perform in the conditions in which it is used, and is compatible with other PPE worn;
- the environment in which it will be worn and, in dusty environments, whether the materials the PPE is made from reduce the tendency for dust to collect on the PPE and be re-released;
- the need to clean and check PPE regularly to ensure that it remains effective.

159 Manufacturers of PPE must ensure that their products comply with the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002.

### Suitable RPE

160 For each work activity for which it is foreseen that employees will need to wear RPE, the employer should specify the suitable equipment to be worn to make sure that employees are given adequate protection. To be suitable, RPE must be capable of adequately controlling the inhalation exposure using as a guide the equipment's assigned protection factor as listed in HSE's Respiratory protective equipment at work. In selecting and providing suitable RPE, consider:

- the level of protection claimed by manufacturers for different types of RPE, and identify those types that will provide the appropriate protection for the likely or known exposure;
- the type of work to be done; the physical effort required to do it; the length of time the RPE will have to be worn; the requirements for visibility, comfort and employee communication; its compatibility with any other PPE that may be needed (eg safety glasses). In addition, the RPE must be matched to the job and the environment in which it is to be used;
- the fit for the wearer. Tight-fitting RPE (ie full and half masks) should be face-fit tested, using a suitable method, by a competent person. Fit testing will need to be repeated when there is any change in equipment or the facial characteristics of the wearer that could affect the fit. Loose-fitting devices, such as powered respirators with a visor or hood, need not be face-fit tested but still need to fit observably close to the face;
- the presence of a 'CE' mark showing that it is manufactured to meet minimum legal requirements, or is of a type approved by, or conforms to a standard approved by HSE;
- the proper training and supervision of employees in its use. This will include wearers being clean-shaven in the area of the face seal when using tight-fitting RPE;
- regular cleaning, checking and maintenance to ensure that it remains effective.

### Employers' duties

167 Employers should establish procedures to ensure that control measures, including PPE and any other item or facility, are properly used or applied and are not made less effective by other work practices or by improper use. The procedures should include:

- visual checks and observations at appropriate intervals;
- ensuring that where more than one item of PPE is being worn, the different items are compatible;
- supervising employees to ensure that the defined methods of work are being followed;
- monitoring systems for the effectiveness of controls and prompt remedial action where necessary.

### Employees' duties

168 Employees should use the control measures in the way they are intended to be used and as they have been instructed. In particular, they should:

- use the control measures provided for materials, plant and processes;
- follow the defined methods of work;
- wear the PPE provided, including any RPE, correctly and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions;
- store the PPE, when not in use, in the accommodation provided;
- remove any PPE which could cause contamination before eating, drinking or smoking;
- maintain a high standard of personal hygiene and make proper use of the facilities provided for washing, showering or bathing and for eating and drinking;
- report promptly to the appointed person, eg 'foreman', supervisor or safety representative, any defects discovered in any control measure, including defined methods of work, device or facility, or any PPE, including RPE.