
	<h1>Frequently Asked Question</h1>				
<b>Ref: FAQ 006:04</b>	<b>RE: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</b>				
<b>Issue Date:</b>	July 2015	<b>Revised Date:</b>	July 2020	<b>Review Date:</b>	December 2021
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<b>Note:</b>	<i>This information/advice has been issued in response to frequently asked questions around a specific topic and may not cover all issues arising, should you require more specific advice please contact the Health &amp; Safety Help Desk. The management of any occupational safety and health issue(s) remains the responsibility of local management.</i>				

### **What does PPE stand for?**

PPE stands for personal protective equipment. PPE means any device or appliance designed to be worn or held by an individual for protection against one or more health and safety hazards.

### **What regulations apply to PPE?**

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, Part 2 Chapter 3 covers Use of Personal Protective Equipment at Work.

European Communities (Personal Protective Equipment) Regulations 1993 provide that PPE may not be placed on the market or brought into service unless it complies with basic health and safety requirements. It is deemed to be in conformity with the Regulations if it bears the CE mark.

### **When must PPE be provided?**

PPE is provided based on the completion of an appropriate risk assessment.

Where there are risks to the safety, health and welfare of employees, there is a duty on the employer to avoid or limit such risks whenever possible by methods of prevention or control, such as engineering controls or safe systems of work. Collective protective measures covering numbers of employees in a workplace must have priority over protective measures applying to individual employees.

PPE should only be provided where the risks cannot be avoided or limited by other means. In circumstances where the risks are sufficiently low and can be considered to be adequately controlled, the provision of PPE is not necessary. ***The fundamental principle is that PPE should only be used as a last resort.***

### ***Why should PPE only be used as a last resort?***

PPE has its limitations because:

- PPE only protects the wearer
- It is ineffective if not working or fitted properly
- Theoretical levels of protection are seldom reached in practice
- The use of PPE always restricts the wearer to some degree
- The psychological effect of PPE may be such that the individual wearing the PPE feels more protected than he or she actually is.

### ***As an employee, do I have to wear PPE?***

**Yes**, having regard to your training and instructions, you must make correct use of PPE. Employees should:

- Use PPE properly and whenever it is required to be used
- Report any defects in or damage to the PPE immediately
- Participate in any training or instruction provided on PPE
- Inform their employer of any medical conditions they have that might be affected by the use of the PPE provided to them

### ***As an Employer/Manager, how do I ensure employees wear their PPE?***

- Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, there is a duty on employees to comply with safety precautions as deemed appropriate through risk assessment this includes the wearing of PPE provided. Where this is not being adhered to, a Manager should ask the employees why the PPE is not being worn in case there is a genuine difficulty being encountered by the employee
- Managers/Employers may consider disciplinary procedures for persistent non wearing of PPE, please refer to HSE disciplinary procedures for more detail

### ***What should the Employer/Manager do before they buy PPE?***

- The employer has to make an assessment of the hazards in the workplace in order to identify the correct type of PPE to be provided and to ensure that PPE is appropriate to the risk. Care must be taken in selecting PPE as certain types give reasonably high levels of protection while others that may appear almost the same, give relatively low levels of protection. The level of risk must be assessed so that the performance required of the PPE can be determined
- Selection of PPE must take account of the proper wearing and fitting of the equipment – and employers should recognise that one type of PPE may not fit all
- In sourcing PPE, the employer must therefore, select appropriate PPE which is user-friendly and which fits the individual employee correctly, after adjustment if necessary
- Special care should be taken where persons suffer from certain medical conditions where the wearing of Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) may have an impact. Where situations such as these occur, the employer should seek medical advice as to whether the employee can tolerate the use of PPE.
- Ensure any PPE purchased complies with the requirements of the European Communities (Personal Protective Equipment) Regulations 1993 which require PPE to have the appropriate 'CE' mark. The CE marking signifies that the PPE satisfies certain basic health and safety requirements.

### ***Who pays for PPE in workplace?***

Section 8 of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 places a duty on employers to supply PPE where risks cannot be eliminated or adequately controlled by other means.

Employers cannot charge the financial costs associated with duties relating to safety, health and welfare at work onto their employees.

### ***As an Employee, do I need training in use of PPE?***

**Yes**, training or instruction would be a requirement for most PPE issued, refer to the points below for further details.

- Where PPE is provided employees must be informed of the risks against which they are being protected by the PPE
- Employees must also be provided with suitable information, instruction and training (including training in the use, care or maintenance of PPE) to enable them to make proper and effective use of any PPE provided for their protection
- PPE users must be trained as regards the wearing, proper use and any limitations of PPE
- Managers should also be aware of the reasons for providing PPE, its proper use and, in particular, the level of protection afforded
- Training, both theoretical and practical, should also cover persons involved in the selection, maintenance, repair and testing of PPE
- The level of training provided will vary with the level of risk involved and the complexity and performance of the equipment. For instance, the use of respiratory equipment will require a comprehensive degree of training with regular refresher courses, whereas the training for using protective gloves for dealing with hazardous substances may require demonstration only. The frequency of the refresher courses required in the case of PPE for high-risk situations will depend on the nature of the equipment, how frequently it is used and the needs of the employees using it.

### ***How should PPE be stored and used?***

- PPE must be stored used and tested in accordance to the manufacturer's instructions

### ***How often should PPE be replaced?***

- There is no legislation or Code of Practice stating the life expectancy of PPE. It is recommended you follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Where there is obvious signs of defect, PPE must be disposed off appropriately
- Please refer to local Infection Control Policy for disposal of PPE e.g. disposal of gloves, aprons, masks etc
- In general, manufacturers provide information on how to identify the "end of life", a limiting date of use or a maximum service time

### ***What is Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE)?***

Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) is a particular type of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), used to protect the individual wearer against inhalation of harmful airborne substances or agents.

### ***Is fit testing necessary?***

Yes, fit testing of RPE is required to ensure that the equipment fits properly to the wearer's face shape, with no gaps between the mask and face for air to pass unfiltered. HSA guidelines recommend fit-testing where respirator masks ("tight fitting filtering face masks") are used.

See: [https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications\\_and\\_Forms/Publications/Chemical\\_and\\_Hazardous\\_Substances/Respiratory%20Protective%20Equipment.pdf](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Chemical_and_Hazardous_Substances/Respiratory%20Protective%20Equipment.pdf)

According to these guidelines fit testing should be repeated in the following circumstances:

- Where the wearer loses or gains weight
- Where the wearer develops any facial changes (scars, moles, etc.) around the face seal area
- Or when the employer's health and safety policy requires it.

For training and fit-testing purposes, it is preferable to standardise a mask from the same manufacturer/supplier (i.e. ideally the same product). However, some variation may be required to suit different users, etc. Fit testing must be carried out by a competent person who will advise on the most appropriate type of test.

If a new mask (i.e. different manufacturer/model) is provided, essentially this is a new piece of equipment with potentially different shape/size characteristics and a fit-test would be recommended in accordance with the above.

### ***How can I avail of fit testing during the COVID-19 pandemic?***

Co-ordinating of FFP2/FFP3 fit testing is via an appointed co-ordinator for sites/services. The co-ordinator can contact Des Pearson, National Health and Safety Manager, WHWU, to facilitate the fit test schedule @ [des.pearson@hse.ie](mailto:des.pearson@hse.ie).

### ***How do I purchase RPE?***

There is a single point of contact for supply and replenishment of critical PPE stocks to support the service through COVID-19. Please see contact details below:

PPE Request Form available [here](#)

Email Address: [covid19.procurement@hse.ie](mailto:covid19.procurement@hse.ie)

Contact Number: [021 465 9770](tel:0214659770)

Once you contact HBS Procurement COVID-19 Customer Service you will be required to complete a standard Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) request form available through the link above.

**If there are issues/concerns regarding any aspect which this FAQ relates, then these should be discussed with your line manager and documented as part of the risk assessment process as appropriate.**