How to Do a PPE Hazard Assessment

Are your workers in danger of becoming a statistic? Thousands of people are blinded each year from work-related eye injuries that could have been prevented with the proper selection and use of eye and face protection. Personal protective equipment (PPE) for the eyes and face is designed to prevent or lessen the severity of injuries to workers. But, to be effective you must first know what hazards your workers are exposed to by doing a hazard assessment.

Hazards

Hazard type	Examples of Hazard	Common Related Tasks
Impact	Flying objects such as large chips, fragments, particles, sand, and dirt	Chipping, grinding, machining, masonry work, wood working, sawing, drilling, chiseling, powered fastening, riveting, and sanding
Heat	Anything emitting extreme heat	Furnace operations, pouring, casting, hot dipping, and welding
Chemicals	Splash, fumes, vapors, and irritating mists	Acid and chemical handling, degreasing, plating, and working with blood
Dust	Harmful dust	Woodworking, buffing, and general dusty conditions
Optical Radiation	Radiant energy, glare, and intense light	Welding, torch-cutting, brazing, soldering, and laser work
Environmental Factors	High humidity, extreme cold/heat, and sources of motion in the area.	Industrial freezer work, working with molten metals

Hazard type	Examples of Hazard	Common Related Tasks
Human Factors	**Length of work with safety equipment, worker fit and comfort, compatibility with prescription eyewear.**	**Employees with corrective lenses should either wear eye protection that incorporates the prescription into the design or wear additional eye protection over their prescription lenses.**

Be a Better Supervisor

Complying with PPE requirements begins with a hazard assessment. Here's an overview of common requirements and how to comply with them.

When Are Assessments Required?

A competent person who has the training and experience necessary to understand the work and the hazards it poses should perform a PPE Hazard Assessment:

- Before a project begins or a site opens.
- Before construction or significant alterations at a site.
- Daily at sites where conditions and hazards change frequently.
- On a frequent and regular basis to catch and prevent development of unsafe and unhealthy conditions.
- When:
    - New work processes are introduced.
    - Work processes or operations change
- Significant incidents suggest that:
    - Hazards have changed.
    - Hazards not identified in previous assessments are present.
    - Current PPE isn't providing enough protection.

Verification of Hazard Assessment

Most safety regulations require employers to provide written verification that a hazard assessment has been completed. The document should:

- Identify the workplace evaluated.
- Identify the person certifying that the evaluation has been performed.
- Include the date(s) of the hazard assessment.
- Include a statement that identifies the document as a "certification of hazard assessment."

What Must Hazard Assessments Cover?

In its simplest form, a hazard assessment used for PPE consists of 3 pieces of information:

1. What work or tasks the employee performs that exposes them to a hazard.
2. What those hazards are.
3. When or where are the work/tasks performed.

When assessing hazards, make sure you don't limit your assessment to just the obvious ones. For example:

- Look at warnings on the machinery you use and read the owner's manual.

- Check with other companies in your industry who have similar processes or equipment.
- Ask experienced employees and newcomers for their insights.