

# Personal Protective Equipment for your Employees ©

Originally Published *Premier Club Services 'At Your Service'*, October 2001

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- *According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 12% of all serious injuries occur on the employee's first day of work.*
- *According to the Center for Disease Control, hospital visits for workplace injuries were 2,188,000 in 1999. That is nearly 250 visits per hour across the United States.*
- *The OSHA complaint process is where employees contact OSHA to level charges against their employer. In 2000, Federal and State OSHA offices conducted 24,490 complaint/ incident related investigations. Of those, 16,553 received referral/ follow-up inspections.*

A professional golfer dons his/her golf glove, ensures it fits securely around each finger, cinches the Velcro tab; selects a club; places the ball on a tee; addresses the ball; mentally chooses the ball's path; swings and we marvel at the shot!

Is a golf glove considered personal protective Equipment (PPE)? I would say, Yes. It protects a hand from abrasion and offers optimum control while using a tool. It's probably one of the most expensive types of PPE since the cost ranges from \$9.00 to \$30.00 at most sport goods stores and you don't even get a matched pair!

## What is a professional?

Webster's dictionary defines a professional as "engaged in a specified occupation for pay or as a means of livelihood." Using this definition, one could assume, since you pay all your employees then all your employees are professionals!

## What types of PPE do your employees need to do their job?

The major questions you will have to address are what hazards might your employees face in undertaking their duties? What are the costs of the PPE? And then, is there specialized equipment that the employees' might need to do their job?

Another consideration is will the employee wear the proper PPE? Just because they have it doesn't mean they will wear it. Your employees may have the following thoughts regarding wearing the PPE they should be using: Who needs it? Who has time to wear it? Is it stylish? Does it fit properly? Is it comfortable? Why wear it if there are no positive or negative benefits for doing so?

A recent survey illustrated that employees wear their ear and eye protection only half the time when needed and respiratory protection was well below that level.

The age old adage of “The staff doesn’t do what you expect, they do what you inspect is definitely applicable when it comes to PPE. So I will ask, “What are you inspecting now?”

### **What PPE is necessary for your operation?**

Possibly all of the following may be needed Eye protection, Hearing protection, Respiratory protection, Hand protection, Foot protection, Apparel and Head protection.

What are the most common items that you need? It depends on what hazards exist at the operation. Following are the common areas that clubs may share. Of course, all clubs are different, yet I will attempt to cover the commonalities.

#### **Grounds**

This area probably has the most PPE available. Again, you must ensure it is being properly used.

#### **Gloves**

There never seems to be a shortage of numerous different sizes and types from cotton, leather and full length rubber gloves and seemingly everyone uses them.

#### **Eye Protection**

Multiple types are necessary for everything from welding, grinding, chemical applications to chainsaw work.

#### **Respiratory Protection**

Most everything from paint spray booths to mixing and applying chemicals requires the use of a respirator. The OSHA standard now requires that employees be medically certified to wear a respirator and also receive fit test training.

#### **Hearing Protection**

One can shut his/her eyes, hold their breath but there is no way to adequately protect the ears unless hearing protection is worn. I remember touring one operation where one employee was operating a loud piece of machinery while wearing his Walkman® and I could hear the music over the machine! (I can only laugh at the stereotype that men have selective hearing. I think we have just been too manly to wear earplugs!) When are earplugs or muffs needed? Whenever a piece of machinery is operating in excess of 85 decibels rated over an eight-hour period. Following are a few of the instances where I have observed employees not wearing hearing protection: operating backpack blowers, chainsaws, tractors, leaf blowers and weed whackers.

#### **Apparel**

The list will go on and on. A few items can include Tyvek® suits for chemical applications, leather or kevlar chaps for chainsaw use, protection from the elements (rain suits, winter apparel, boots...).

### **Head and Foot Protection**

These are other considerations depending on the types of work your staff may perform. Some items may include hard hats and steel toe boots.

(Author's note: I vehemently oppose requiring employees to wear head protection from golf balls! This is conveying a false sense of security. I personally believe that more employees are injured because the golfers consider the employees protected and then they hit their ball while the staff is still in range. The area of protection is so small that it is negligible. As Dennis Miller of Home Box Office and football announcing fame would say, "Of course that is my opinion, I could be wrong!")

## **Maintenance**

### **Gloves**

Rubber chemical resistant, leather and possibly even those for cold weather outdoor work should be available.

### **Eye Protection**

Multiple types may also be necessary for everything from wood working, welding, power washing to drain and toilet cleaning.

### **Respiratory Protection**

Do you have a talented professional that does paint spraying? Or refinishing work? There are innumerable products that may be impacting this person's health.

### **Hearing Protection**

What power tools are currently used? Routers, circular and table saws, jackhammers and leaf blowers are just a few tools that come immediately to mind. Ear plugs or earmuffs should be readily available.

### **Apparel**

In an article for another publication, I mentioned the death of a professional football player from heat exhaustion. Are your employees wearing dark colored uniforms in the summer? What about the cold weather apparel? Are they adequately protected from the elements?

### **Head and Foot Protection**

These are some other considerations depending on the types of work your maintenance staff may perform.

## **The Kitchen**

**Gloves** – How many different types of gloves may be found in the kitchen? Obviously, food service or examination style, rubber chemical resistant gloves and kevlar or metal mesh gloves for cleaning the slicer or opening oysters. You can even use the food service gloves when it is time to clean up after an employee cuts his or herself.

### **Eye Protection**

Goggles and or chemical splash glasses should be utilized when an employee is adding bleach to the floor wash water. Oh, you say you have one of those automatic chemical-dispensing units for cleaning solutions? Have you looked at the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for the required PPE on these systems?

### **Respiratory Protection**

Are Respirators necessary in the kitchen? That depends on the chemicals you use. Respirators in the kitchen - you're thinking - I must be nuts to tell you that you now have to train your dishwashers to wear respirators! Let me ask, have you ever used oven cleaner at home? Rather a better question is have you ever read the MSDS for oven cleaner? You think that I must be nuts to ask that one too! Who even has time to read the directions on a can of oven cleaner? Well, do you remember the last time that you had to clean the oven? Of course, you read the directions. You went directly to the Fast Cleaning Directions: Heat the oven to 200° F. Turn off oven and spray as directed ... then wipe clean...Do you ever remember the fumes? Sort of take your breath away? The active ingredient of oven cleaner is sodium hydroxide or lye. This author had the most unpleasant experience of having lye sprayed in one eye while cleaning the kitchen exhaust hood and fortunately, there was a knowledgeable employee working at the time who insistently ensured the eye was flushed. Try irrigating your eye with seemingly **ICE COLD** water for 15 minutes and see how unpleasant an experience that can be and of course, I'll admit that eye protection was not being used. (That incident occurred in the mid 70's, long before anyone was using PPE.)

### **Apparel**

Besides the normal kitchen uniforms provided, you may want to consider an infectious material clean-up kit. This is a seemingly small package that contains gloves, facemask, apron and other materials to clean up blood. Nowadays, with Hepatitis and AIDS, the former mode of using rags to clean up after an employee cuts his/herself it is just not worth the associated risks. This package is an integral part of your Blood Borne Pathogen policy, yet that will be addressed in another article!

### **Pro Shop**

Quite a few items are necessary in the shop (and contiguous areas) and are **rarely** readily available (from my experience in conducting simulated OSHA site tours).

Eyewear is needed for those working on re-gripping clubs and also for the person adding water to the batteries; an eyewash / shower station should be in the cart areas; gloves for cleaning and abrasion protection.

### **Pool operations**

The lifeguards have all the equipment for rescuing and first aid. Yet, most pool chemical rooms that I have inspected are woefully under prepared to handle a chemical spill. In fact, rarely are gloves, goggles or eyewash / shower stations even in the area. Properly stored respirators and properly trained employees should receive strong consideration.

### **Other types of clubs or facilities**

Other PPE operational considerations encompass clubs that have SCUBA divers, gun clubs, skating rinks and equestrian facilities.

This article briefly delved into the various types of PPE you may need at your operation. There is no way for an article to inform you of all your needs. The best sources are your employees. Additionally, your MSDSs will provide guidance.

### **A Closing Thought**

With the shrinking qualified labor force available, don't you think it is a good idea to provide your employees with all the equipment to do their job properly? Benefits may include keeping your current employees on the job, a reduction in your Worker's Compensation premium and fewer listings on your OSHA 300 log.