

PPE

No matter what industry your business operates in, you will be familiar with Personal Protective Equipment otherwise known as PPE. Last April, the PPE Directive 89/686/EEC was replaced by the Regulation 2016/425 in a bid to improve health and safety at work.

Many business owners will be questioning both what this means for their organisation and the changes it could pose to their overall operations in the UK and across the European Union (EU). The new regulation is a binding legislative act that must be applied in its entirety across EU states without requiring separate national legislation.

Previously, the PPE Directive was completely focused on manufacturers who placed products into the market. However, the new Regulation that was put into action on 21st April 2018 also includes the entire supply chain. As a result, anyone who is part of the supply or distribution chain must abide by the Regulation's and meet the standard requirements that have been set out — while also having an understanding that only products that meet the standards will be readily available on the market.

The Main Standards:

- Making sure PPE complies with the essential health and safety requirements.
- Making sure technical documentation has been drawn up.
- When compliance has been demonstrated the EU declaration of conformity has been drawn up and a CE mark affixed.
- Retention of documents for ten years.
- Sample testing.
- Duty to take action in relation to non-conforming PPE.
- Labelling requirements.
- Providing instructions and cooperating with the national authority.

The one-year transition period, ended on 21st April 2019, bringing to a close, the twelve months where both the former Directive and current Regulation are both applicable to businesses. While the Regulation will be the only legislation that applies from then, any EC type-examination certificates and approvals issued under the Directive will remain valid until the 21st April 2023, unless they have an earlier expiry date.

Personal Protective Equipment Categories:

There are three main categories associated with PPE, which determine the necessity of each piece of workwear.

Category I (simple design)

where workers assess the level of protection needed against minimal risks. This could include the use of garden gloves, footwear or ski goggles for example.

Category II (neither simple nor complex)

clothing that does not clearly fall within the descriptions of Category I or Category III, which can include the likes of dry and wet suits.

Category III (complex design)

any item that falls under this section is complex in design and is intended to protect workers against mortal dangers and any irreversible harm that could impact a person's health. To give you an idea, this could potentially include harnesses and respiratory equipment.

Are Workers Compliant With PPE?

It's no secret that employers have a duty to ensure personal protection is implemented across their workplace — but are workers showing a willingness to wear such clothing? Figures suggest that 98% of employees have seen colleagues not wearing PPE when they were supposed to, with a further 30% saying this happens on a regular basis.

Some employees said they were not wearing the appropriate workwear as it looked unattractive, made them too hot, was a poor fit and was not very practical, all of which should not be the case for workwear.

Stats:

- 98% of employees have seen colleagues not wearing PPE when they were supposed to.
- Did you know that 9% of all injuries are head injuries because the majority of such occurrences have not been wearing the proper headwear?
- 25% of all workplace injuries involve a person's fingers and hands which could be reduced by 60% if safety gloves are worn.
- 25% of employees are exposed to noise that are higher than the recommended level too, but such damage can be reduced 99% by wearing the right type of hearing protection.

As the figures show, it's evident that education on PPE is key to target workers across many industries with. However, businesses must also realise that workers feel uncomfortable in the PPE workwear that has been distributed to them — you must strike a balance between safety requirements and comfort to ensure that staff wear such equipment when needed.