Toolbox talk

PPE: the right kit and why

The last line of defence, so wear it right

10 minutes | For: Everyone on site, including employees and casual or irregular (limb b) workers

Why it matters

PPE is the last line of protection when risks remain after other controls. If it is the wrong type, does not fit or is damaged, it may not protect you when you need it. Since 6 April 2022, the PPE at Work Regulations also cover limb (b) workers, so more people on site must be given PPE free of charge.

Key points

1. HSE says PPE should be the last resort, after removing or controlling the risk in other ways.
2. If a risk assessment shows PPE is needed, your employer must provide it free of charge.
3. This covers employees and limb (b) workers. Genuine self-employed people have their own duties; a job label alone does not decide employment status.
4. PPE must be suitable for the job, fit you properly, and be maintained and stored properly.
5. Head: hard hats in good condition, from a reputable supplier. Replace damaged ones.
6. Eyes, ears and hands: eye protection, hearing protection and gloves matched to the task.
7. Feet and body: safety boots with toecaps; hi-vis wherever vehicles or plant are working.
8. Lungs: RPE stops you breathing in dust, mist, gas or fume. Tight-fitting masks need face fit testing.

Sources: HSE: Using personal protective equipment (PPE) to control risks at work; HSE: Managing risk using PPE; HSE: Extended scope of the PPE at Work Regulations; HSE: Construction FAQs, PPE and hi-vis.

This talk supports, but does not replace, your site-specific risk assessment, method statement, training and supervision. Free to copy and use. **tradefoxapp.com/toolbox-talks/ppe**

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Do

- Check your kit before each use and report anything lost or damaged.
- Use PPE the way you were trained and shown.
- Make sure items work together, like a hard hat that still lets you wear ear defenders.
- Return PPE to its storage area after use.
- Ask your supervisor if you are not sure what PPE a task needs.

Don't

- Don't wear damaged or modified PPE, like a cracked hard hat.
- Don't buy cheap or fake kit from unknown sellers.
- Don't rely on PPE when the job could be made safer another way.
- Don't take off hi-vis when stepping out of a vehicle near moving plant.
- Don't pay for PPE your employer must provide.

Ask the group

- What PPE does your task today need, and why?
- Has anyone got kit that is worn out, damaged or doesn't fit properly?
- Can you think of a job here where we could remove the risk instead of relying on PPE?
- Where do we store PPE on this site, and how do we report faulty kit?

If it goes wrong: If your PPE is damaged, lost or fails during a task, stop and tell your supervisor before carrying on. If someone is hurt, get first aid and call 999 in an emergency.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____ Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

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Go further: Read the Tradefox guide to construction site PPE by trade

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Attendance register

PPE: the right kit and why

Site / project _____ Date and time _____

Presented by _____ Company _____

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
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11			
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13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature _____ Follow-up actions _____

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Sources: HSE: Using personal protective equipment (PPE) to control risks at work; HSE: Managing risk using PPE; HSE: Extended scope of the PPE at Work Regulations; HSE: Construction FAQs, PPE and hi-vis.
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Quick check

PPE: the right kit and why

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. Where does PPE sit in the hierarchy of control?

- [ ] First choice
- [ ] Last resort
- [ ] Only for visitors

2. If a risk assessment says you need PPE, who pays for it?

- [ ] You do
- [ ] You split it with your employer
- [ ] Your employer, free of charge

3. Since April 2022, PPE duties also cover which workers?

- [ ] Limb (b) workers
- [ ] Only managers
- [ ] The self-employed

4. Your hard hat is cracked. What should you do?

- [ ] Tape it up
- [ ] Report it and get it replaced
- [ ] Keep wearing it until the job ends

5. When should you wear hi-vis?

- [ ] Only at night
- [ ] Only in the welfare cabin
- [ ] Wherever vehicles or plant are working

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For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. Last resort

HSE says PPE should be the last resort, after other controls.

2. Your employer, free of charge

Employers must provide PPE free of charge where it is needed.

3. Limb (b) workers

Since 6 April 2022 the duties also cover 'limb (b)' workers, such as many casual workers, but not the self-employed.

4. Report it and get it replaced

Damaged hard hats should be replaced. Report defects straight away.

5. Wherever vehicles or plant are working

HSE says hi-vis should be worn wherever vehicles or plant operate, including by drivers who get out.

Sources

- HSE: Using personal protective equipment (PPE) to control risks at work
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/overview.htm
- HSE: Managing risk using PPE
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/managing-risk-using-ppe.htm
- HSE: Extended scope of the PPE at Work Regulations
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/ppe-regulations-2022.htm
- HSE: Construction FAQs, PPE and hi-vis
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/faq-ppe.htm

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

TRADEFOX

Toolbox talk 06 · Site poster
Last reviewed 25 November 2026

Right kit, right fit

1. **Check your PPE before every use**
2. **Report damaged or lost kit**
3. **Store it properly after use**

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Sources and qualifications

PPE: the right kit and why

Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. HSE: PPE overview

PPE hierarchy, employer duties, free provision, selection, fit, maintenance and training.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/overview.htm

S2. HSE: PPE Regulations 2022

Limb (b) workers, genuine self-employment and April 2022 scope; key point 3 and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/ppe-regulations-2022.htm

S3. HSE: Construction PPE FAQs

Construction head protection, footwear, hi-vis and task-specific PPE; Do/Don't and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/faq-ppe.htm