

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Purpose:** These FAQs provide background information on the purpose of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and the requirements of Stanford University's PPE Program.

For technical consultation on PPE assessments or PPE training, please contact Stanford Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) at (650) 723-0448.

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### Questions

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## General Information About PPE

### 1. *What is personal protective equipment (PPE)?*

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is equipment worn to minimize exposure to workplace hazards. Main categories of PPE include:

- Protective clothing (e.g., laboratory coats)
- Eye/face protection (e.g., safety glasses, goggles, face shield)
- Gloves to match the hazard (e.g., chemical-resistant, thermal protection, cut-resistant)
- Protective footwear (e.g., steel-toed shoes)
- Hearing protection (e.g., earplugs, ear muffs)
- Respirators (e.g., N95 filtering face-piece, half-face negative pressure respirator)

### 2. *Based on the hierarchy of controls, PPE is considered the last resort. Why is this?*

Whenever feasible, hazards must be controlled through engineering and/or administrative controls, prior to implementing the use of PPE. PPE can be used to augment engineering or administrative controls or as a stand-alone control when engineering and administrative controls are not feasible. When properly selected and used, PPE can be effective in eliminating or minimizing individual exposures to hazardous materials and physical hazards encountered in different work environments.

### 3. *What are hazardous materials and physical hazards?*

- **Hazardous Materials:** Chemical and biological materials/agents that pose a health or physical hazard and unsealed radioactive materials.
- **Physical Hazards:** Substances, equipment, or activities that pose potential threat to physical safety. Examples of physical hazards include, but are not limited to: extreme pressures, temperature extremes, radiation (ionizing and non-ionizing), noise, and flying hazards due to machining equipment.

### 4. *If I am working with multiple hazards simultaneously (e.g., physical and chemical hazards) what PPE should I wear?*

Wear PPE to protect for all hazards, as determined by the hazard assessment; if you have any questions, please contact EH&S at (650) 723-0448.

## Information about Stanford University's PPE Program

### 5. *What is the purpose of Stanford University's Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Program?*

This program is designed to protect personnel from potential workplace hazards and comply with Cal/OSHA, 8 CCR 3380, [Personal Protective Devices](#), as well as other Cal/OSHA regulations.

6. *Who does Stanford University's PPE Program apply to?*

Faculty, staff, and students who perform tasks with hazardous materials and/or physical hazards or are potentially exposed to such hazards in either laboratory or general work areas.

7. *What actions do Supervisors and PIs/Lab Supervisors need to take to implement the PPE program in their work areas?*

- (1) Identify PPE requirements by completing Section II of the [General Work Area](#) or [Laboratory PPE Assessment Tool](#).
- (2) Provide site-specific PPE training to personnel.
- (3) Ensure the provision, maintenance, replacement, and disposal of PPE.
- (4) Maintain records of completed PPE assessment and training.

8. *What is a PPE assessment?*

A PPE assessment is designed to: (a) determine hazards present or likely to be present in the work area/lab which necessitate the use of PPE; and (b) select the correct PPE to wear to protect the affected personnel from the hazards identified.

9. *Who must conduct the PPE Assessment?*

The Supervisor, Principal Investigator/Lab Supervisor, or his/her designee.

10. *How often must the PPE assessment be conducted and where must the documentation be maintained?*

- The PPE assessment must be conducted initially and when new hazards are introduced into the general work and/or laboratory areas.
- The PPE assessment must be kept current and in an easily accessible location in the work area, either electronically or in a paper form.

11. *How often must the PPE training be conducted and how long must the documentation be maintained?*

- Personnel must be trained prior to performing work requiring the use of PPE.
- Retraining is required of laboratory personnel when:
  - Changes in activities/operations render previous PPE training obsolete.
  - Inadequacy of personnel's knowledge or use of PPE is evident.
- The training documentation must be kept for at least one year.

12. *Who is responsible for enforcement of PPE usage?*

The Supervisor or Principal Investigator/Lab Supervisor is responsible for ensuring his/her personnel use, maintain, replace, and dispose of PPE properly.

13. *Do supervisors need to conduct a PPE assessment if their work area does not have any hazardous materials or physical hazards?*

No. However, a PPE assessment is required if hazardous materials or physical hazards are later introduced into the work area.

## Provision of PPE

14. *Who provides PPE?*

- The Supervisor or PI/Lab Supervisor is responsible for providing the required PPE as identified by the PPE assessment.
- For non-employees, it is the discretion of the Supervisor or PI/Lab Supervisor to provide PPE as identified by the PPE assessment. If not provided, the list of PPE required for the work assignment must be given to the individual to acquire prior to his/her work assignment.

15. *Who provides PPE for students in teaching labs?*

It is the discretion of the local department to provide lab coats and other PPE for student use in teaching labs/shops and for field work. If not provided, the list of PPE required for the class must be given to the students to acquire prior to their class assignment.

16. *Are there any special requirements for use of respirators and hearing protectors?*

Respirator and hearing protector use requires an EH&S assessment to identify the need and type, additional training, and possible medical surveillance; contact EH&S at 723-0448.

17. *Must PPE meet certain specifications?*

The PPE must meet the PPE specifications stated in applicable CAL/OSHA Title 8 standards, as well as properly fit the individual, be reasonably comfortable, and not unduly encumber the individual's movements necessary to perform his or her work.

18. *Where can I obtain information on acquiring PPE?*

See Stanford University's guidance, [Where to Acquire Personal Protective Equipment](#).

19. *Where can I procure lab coats and have them laundered?*

For information on lab coats, see [Stanford University's campus-wide agreement on lab coat provision and laundry service](#).

20. *How often should lab coats be laundered?*

Lab coats must be cleaned when contaminated with hazardous materials and be maintained in a safe and sanitary condition so as not to create a hazard.

21. *Where can I get information on prescription safety eyewear?*

See Stanford University's [Prescription Safety Eyewear Program](#).

## PPE Use in Laboratories

### 22. *What is considered a laboratory?*

Locations where hazardous materials and/or equipment are used and/or stored in research laboratories, teaching laboratories, and core facilities. This also includes chemical storage rooms, waste accumulation areas, warm/cold rooms, vivaria, and machine/workshop areas within laboratories.

### 23. *What PPE and street clothing are required when working with hazardous materials and/or physical hazards in laboratories?*

- Wear the PPE that corresponds to the specific hazard listed in Section II of the *Laboratory PPE Assessment Tool*.
- Also wear proper street clothing, which is defined as long pants (or equivalent) that covers legs and ankles, and non-perforated, closed-toed shoes that completely cover feet.

### 24. *Do laboratory personnel need to wear PPE if they are observing a lab operation conducted by others?*

Yes. If laboratory personnel are not directly involved in a lab operation, but there is risk for potential exposure to hazardous materials and/or physical hazards, minimally wear lab coat, safety glasses, and proper street clothing. If touching any potentially contaminated surface, also wear gloves to match the hazard.

### 25. *Do visitors touring a laboratory need to wear PPE?*

If visitors are not directly involved in a lab operation, but there is risk for potential exposure to hazardous materials and/or physical hazards, minimally wear lab coat, safety glasses, and proper street clothing.

### 26. *Do minors need to wear PPE in the laboratory?*

Refer to direction on PPE use for minors in:

- Exclusion of Minors in the Workplace:  
<http://asg.stanford.edu/pages/forms/KidsAtWork.pdf>
- Health & Safety Requirements for Minors in Laboratories at Stanford University  
<http://web.stanford.edu/dept/EHS/prod/mainrencon/occhealth/11-038.pdf>

## PPE Use in General Work Areas

### 27. *What is considered a general work area?*

All other spaces that do not fall under the description of laboratory (see #22). This includes areas such as shops, kitchens, loading docks, visual/performing art studios, and janitorial storage areas.

28. *What PPE is required when working with hazardous materials and/or physical hazards in facilities such as machine shops and dining kitchens?*

- Wear the PPE that corresponds to the specific hazard listed in Section II of the [General Work Area PPE Assessment Tool](#) for the work area.
- Also, wear proper street clothing, which is defined as long pants (or equivalent) that cover the legs and ankles, and non-perforated, closed-toed shoes that completely cover the feet.