



Considering Work Attire as Personal Protective Equipment – PPE in the workplace

Many of us work in casual environments where there are very few hazards that we may come into contact as we go about our day. The hazards that do exist in our work environments typically have been identified and engineering and/or administrative controls have been implemented to prevent injuries to employees. However, many of us don't always realize that what we wear could actually enhance or diminish the effects a hazard may have on causing an injury. As an example, wearing open-toed shoes in a library could be seen as a benign event, but if a heavy book should drop and hit an exposed toe, it could result in an employee injury.

Listed below are things to keep in mind when considering what you should wear to work:

- Don't wear loose clothing or jewelry when working around machinery.
- Wear close-toed shoes when working in environments where heavy objects could fall, working on uneven terrain, or especially when working with large boxes and carts.
- Keep a spare pair of closed-toed shoes at work for those tasks that require protective footwear.
- Always wear a hard hat when there are overhead hazards in the workplace.
- During warm weather, wear clothing that is breathable and not restrictive.
- If working in the sun for long periods of time use sun screen and/or wear a hat with a wide brim.
- Read the operator's manual for any machinery that you are using and follow any guidelines that it has for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

When it comes to PPE, remember these things:

- Be aware of the different types of PPE available at your workplace.
- Know the basic conditions and properties of any hazards in your work area.
- Select the appropriate PPE to protect yourself from workplace hazards.
- Practice using PPE so when the need arises you know how to use it properly.
- Don't wear torn or ragged clothing.
- When working outside, it is recommended that long sleeve shirts and full length pants be worn.
- During cool weather, wear removable layers to allow for daily temperature fluctuations.
- Keep your socks dry; wet socks can cause foot infections.

Following these suggestions does not mean you have to give up your personal style, but rather that you should try to incorporate safety into the attire you choose to wear at work. This will not just make you a valued employee, but a safe employee too.