

UW POLICY DIRECTORY

Rescinded 11-17-25

AP 10.4 – Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing

(Approved by the Vice President for Health Sciences by authority of Executive Order No. 1)

1. Overview

Personal protective equipment and clothing include any device worn or carried by an individual to protect against hazardous processes or environments such as exposure to chemical or radiological hazards or mechanical irritants. Examples of equipment and clothing are as follows: goggles, safety glasses, ear muffs, ear plugs, hard hats, gloves, respirators, safety-toe footwear, welder's capes, chemical aprons, fall arresting harnesses, and personal flotation devices.

Washington State safety and health standards describe circumstances under which employees and students are required to use personal protective equipment and clothing. University visitors will be permitted to enter areas where protective clothing or equipment is required only when they are adequately equipped. The Environmental Health and Safety Department (EH&S) is available to assist departments in identifying areas where this equipment is required and to advise on specific types of protective equipment.

2. Personal Protective Equipment for Faculty and Staff Employees

The employing department must furnish appropriate personal protective equipment for all assignments with an established hazard. Exceptions are that the employee must furnish his or her own prescription safety glasses and safety-toe footwear (see Subsections 2.C and 2.D). University owned personal protective equipment issued to an employee should be maintained by the employee following an approved maintenance program specified by the employing department. The equipment returned by an employee must be cleaned, sanitized, and inspected for serviceability before being issued to another employee. Following are special programs and procedures for specific personal protective equipment.

A. Hearing Protection

EH&S staff measures noise levels in working situations that are considered hazardous. The employing department is notified if the noise levels exceed permissible standards established by the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I).

1. **Employing Department—** The employing department is responsible for ensuring that employees working in identified situations participate in a hearing conservation program, are provided with appropriate protection devices, and wear these devices when exposed to the identified noise levels.
2. **Participating Employees—** Employees identified for participation in the hearing conservation program must wear the appropriate hearing protection device in exposure situations and take part in annual training and audiometric testing. The hearing conservation program includes:
 - Annual audiometric testing;
 - Annual hearing conservation training;
 - Consultation on selection and fit of appropriate protective devices;

- Periodic environmental monitoring;
- Consultation on required areas where devices must be worn; and
- Health evaluations as required.

B. Respirator Protection

EH&S staff measures work areas to determine the potential exposure to airborne contaminants. Respirator protection is required for employees exposed to airborne substances in concentrations exceeding those permitted by occupational safety and health standards when other measures cannot be taken to reduce exposure. This protection is also required for employees performing nonroutine operations resulting in exposure to high concentrations of a hazardous substance and employees working in areas with an oxygen deficient atmosphere.

- 1. Employing Department—** The employing department is notified if respirators are needed and is responsible for establishing operating procedures, providing respirators, ensuring that employees use the respirators, and ensuring participation in annual training and health evaluations.
- 2. Participating Employee—** The employee is required to wear respiratory equipment in areas or specific positions identified by EH&S. The employee must also maintain the respirator and ensure that it fits properly as described in training. Nothing may interfere with a tight seal between the respirator and the face (such as hair, glasses, etc.). All employees who are required to use respiratory protection devices must participate in the respiratory protection program. This program includes:
 - Consultation on the type of protection device required;
 - Annual training for supervisors and employees on proper fit, use, care, and maintenance (including cleaning) of respiratory protection devices;
 - Periodic environmental monitoring of the workplace; and
 - Annual health evaluation to determine if the employee is physically able to perform the work while using a respirator.

C. Eye Protection

Eye protection is required for employees who operate machines or participate in work situations where eye injuries may be caused by physical, chemical, or radiation agents. The employing department is required to furnish nonprescription safety glasses or protective goggles appropriate to the job assignment. Full-time employees who purchase industrial type prescription safety glasses (which conform to American National Standards Institute standard Z87.1-1979) can receive a \$10 reimbursement for safety glasses from departmental funds. The form to authorize this reimbursement is available from EH&S. A receipt is necessary for reimbursement and the petty cash fund is an authorized source for reimbursement.

D. Foot Protection

Each department must identify new positions or job assignments that require foot protection. EH&S will review the identified positions against applicable safety standards and designate those jobs where safety-toe footwear is required. EH&S will notify the department and Human Resources of the requirement and the Personnel Request will include a statement that appropriate safety-toe footwear is required. Prospective employees must be advised by the employing official that the purchase of safety-toe footwear is required.

Employees who require foot protection on an occasional basis may either purchase safety-toe footwear or wear appropriate strap-on foot guards furnished by the employing department. An employee who is exposed 50% or more of the time to conditions which necessitate protective footwear must purchase and use safety-toe footwear. As a convenience to employees, a safety-toe footwear van is on campus periodically. Scheduled dates are publicized in University Week. Employees needing protective footwear may visit the van during working hours. Employees who experience orthopedic foot problems from wearing safety-toe footwear should call EH&S for assistance. Following are some situations where safety-toe footwear is required:

- Situations where carried or lifted items could drop;
- Situations where items could fall from overhead or from shelves;

- Use of equipment in handling heavy materials such as forklifts, front loaders, pallet jacks, lift gate trucks and screw conveyers;
- Use of power mowers, sweepers, floor sanders, or similar machines;
- Incidence of foot injuries in similar situations;
- When use is established in precedents set by judicial courts or an occupational health and safety review committee; and
- When such use is accepted practice in the industry.

3. Personal Protective Equipment for Students

A. Common Use Items

When courses include laboratory, shop or field work requiring the use of personal protective equipment, approved common use items such as foot guards, welding aprons, face shields, etc., will be provided by the sponsoring department.

B. Personal Use Items

Items such as eye and hearing protection devices, respirators, work gloves, etc., that must be sanitized before use by another person, must be purchased by the student if the course requires them. Under the provisions of [Chapter 70.100 RCW](#), eye protection devices must be furnished to the student at cost. Academic departments may furnish these items under a course fee system or may request that the University Bookstore stock them. The academic department is responsible for training students in the proper use of required protective devices.

4. Personal Protective Equipment for Visitors

Visitors must wear appropriate personal protective equipment when entering areas where it is required for employees or students. The host department is responsible for maintaining a minimum stock of suitable personal protective equipment for loan when experience indicates visitors can be expected. When devices such as safety goggles, respirators, etc., which have direct skin contact have been loaned to visitors, they must be cleaned and sanitized before being loaned to another person. The host department must ensure that the visitor is familiar with proper use.

5. Approval of Safety Equipment Purchases

To ensure that safety equipment, including personal protective equipment and clothing, is appropriate for its intended use and is in compliance with state standards and requirements, Request for Purchase forms and the product description portion of bid quotations are reviewed by EH&S prior to purchase or contract finalization. Safety equipment stocked by University Stores is routinely screened by EH&S to ensure that only acceptable items are stocked.

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