



Personal protective equipment: the focus of October inspection blitz

In October, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) will conduct a month-long inspection blitz on personal protective equipment (PPE) in the industrial and transportation sectors. PPE is anything a worker wears to protect him- or herself from dangers in the workplace. Some examples are respirators, gloves, ear plugs, hard hats, safety goggles, and safety shoes or boots. For this blitz, MOL inspectors will focus on head, eye, and foot protection.

According to Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), PPE must be used by workers wherever there are health or safety risks that cannot be controlled adequately in other ways. The construction regulations describe the PPE that is required for specific hazards that a worker may encounter, such as asbestos, silica, small work spaces, etc.

Why focus on PPE?

The numbers tell the story. In 2010, according to the MOL, there were

- 1,075 lost-time eye injuries that in some cases caused either temporary or permanent vision loss.
- 1,515 lost-time head injuries due to the impact of an object. In most cases, the injured workers were not wearing head protection at the time.
- 1,120 lost-time foot injuries caused by the worker's foot being crushed, punctured, or doused with hazardous substances.

Duties under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*

For provincially regulated firms, the employer, supervisors, and employees each have specific duties under the OHSA when it comes to PPE.

- Under section 25, an employer must provide PPE, ensure that it is used by the worker, and maintain it in good condition.
- Under section 27, a supervisor must ensure that a worker uses any PPE required by the Act, the regulations, or the employer.
- Under section 28, a worker must wear the required PPE and report any missing or defective PPE. Workers are not allowed to remove any required PPE or render it ineffective.

Duties under the *Canada Labour Code, Part II*

Firms under federal jurisdiction must follow Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*. Under subsection 122.2, preventive measures should first eliminate hazards, then reduce hazards, and finally provide personal protective equipment, clothing, devices, or materials.

According to sections 125 and 126 of the Code,

- An employer must provide every person at the workplace with prescribed safety materials, equipment, devices, and clothing.
- An employee must use any protective safety materials, equipment, devices, and clothing provided by the employer or prescribed by the Code.

Under the federal rules, the health and safety representative, the workplace health and safety committee, or the policy health and safety committee (depending on the size of the company) must take an active part in creating and maintaining a firm's PPE provision program. This program lays out a firm's policies about using and maintaining PPE.

Standards

PPE must be kept in good working order and replaced if it is damaged or has expired. It must also meet the various Canadian standards such as:

- Z94.4-02 - *Selection, Care and Use of Respirators*
- Z94.3-07 - *Eye and Face Protectors*
- Z94.1-05 - *Protective Headwear*
- Z195-09 - *Protective Footwear*
- Z94.2-02 - *Hearing Protection Devices*

IHSA resources

IHSA can help firms set up and maintain a PPE provision program that meets the needs of their particular industry. To learn more, visit the PPE page in the topics section of our website.

