



Workplace Safety for Women

Proper-fitting PPE designed for women bolsters their safety and protection.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is vital in ensuring worker safety across all trade industries. However, when PPE doesn't fit workers correctly, it can be just as dangerous as not wearing any protection at all. A problem that is particularly challenging for women, who historically have had limited access to PPE designed to fit their body type with the same level of performance as standard PPE offerings.

Ill-fitting PPE can lead to reduced protection against workplace hazards. For example, when PPE is too big or too small, it may not cover the body correctly, leaving workers vulnerable to risks such as chemical splashes, sharp objects or falling debris. Not to mention an improper fit can hinder movement and cause discomfort, leading to distractions and reduced efficiency. What's more, oversized PPE runs the risk of becoming entangled in machinery, resulting in severe injuries that can be fatal.

Historically, PPE has been designed with male body shapes and sizes as the standard, resulting in limited options for women. Consequently, due to the limited offerings of women's PPE in what was once considered male-dominated industries, women may feel pressured to conform to more traditional gender norms, choosing between oversized men's PPE or undersized options that fail to provide adequate protection.

When it comes to PPE designed specifically for women, options may be limited to less-than-ideal approaches, such as simple size reduction and additions of more "feminine" colors. Unfortunately, this often fails to consider the unique physical characteristics of women construction workers, let alone optimize their safety, resulting in discomfort and increased risk of injury on the jobsite.

Companies can help address this issue by conducting a thorough hazard assessment to identify their employees' specific risks and hazards and selecting PPE accordingly. By considering the needs of all workers, including women, employers can ensure everyone has access to properly fitting PPE.

Employers need to drop the one-size fits-all mentality and start stocking various sizes and cuts of PPE. By including options designed specifically for women, companies make it easier for female employees to find the protection they need to be safe and performing at their best.

Another critical step companies should take is involving workers in the PPE selection process. By seeking employee input and considering their preferences and comfort, employers can better understand the unique needs of all employee body types and address any concerns.

Training on the proper use and maintenance of PPE, including information on determining the correct fit, is also essential. This knowledge empowers workers to advocate for their safety needs and ensures that everyone uses PPE effectively. Prioritizing investments in

PPE designed specifically for women is essential for several reasons. First and foremost, it bolsters safety and protection. Providing female employees with PPE tailored to their body shapes and sizes ensures they are well-protected against workplace hazards.

Beyond benefiting employees, investing in adequately fitting PPE also has positive financial implications for companies. For example, fewer workplace accidents and injuries can result in lower insurance premiums, reduced workers' compensation claims and less downtime due to injury-related absences.

A safer work environment can enhance a company's reputation, making it more appealing to clients, investors, and potential employees. Going the extra mile to provide the proper PPE demonstrates a commitment to worker safety. In addition, it sends a strong message to current and prospective employees, clients, and partners that the company values the well-being of its entire workforce.

As the workforce becomes increasingly diverse, companies must adapt their safety practices and policies to meet the needs of all employees, regardless of gender. By doing so, companies can create a more inclusive and equitable workplace that benefits both employees and their bottom line.

Finding a supplier that provides high quality protective workwear designed specifically for a woman is often more challenging than one might think. Many PPE providers claim to have PPE for women but are providing male PPE in a smaller size. Designing PPE for women goes beyond size and color to needing different cuts, detailing and materials.