

TUC

Changing the world
of work for good

Checking your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

A TUC guide for trade union activists

Checking if your PPE is genuine.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is an item held or worn by an individual which protects against one or more hazards. It can include common items such as Hi-visibility jackets, safety footwear, hard hats and eye or ear protection, through to very specialist equipment such as fall arrest harnesses and specialist respirators.

To be effective the equipment has to be able to do the job it is designed for. In part that means employers must make sure that the equipment is suitable for the job it is intended to do, but it also has to be of a quality that means it will not fail.

All items of PPE that are placed on the European market are obliged to carry the **CE** mark and therefore must fulfil numerous basic health and safety requirements laid down by the PPE Directive.

All safety equipment must, not only carry the **CE** mark, it must be bigger than 5mm and the instructions must be comprehensible and written the official language of the country it is sent to.

In the UK there are an increasing number of reported cases of PPE being placed on the market that does not meet the legal requirement. Sometimes this is because they have been made for use outside Europe where standards are lower, but it can also be a result of counterfeiting.

Counterfeit PPE is on the increase, with well established product brands or designs being the primary target. In some sectors over half the products tested were counterfeit. Although the biggest problems are in construction and transport, any industry can be affected.

Much of the problem is that employers are increasingly trying to cut corners and buy products from internet sites and auction sites that advertise cheaper products.

The issue of counterfeit and illegal products is a serious one in that often these products do not perform as they should, putting the lives or health of your members at risk.

Safety representatives can help prevent problems with PPE by ensuring that their employer consults with them over the type of PPE they buy. They can also check that any PPE that is provided is legal.

□ CHECKLIST FOR SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES.

To make sure that any PPE is compliant with the law, check with your employer:

- Was it purchased from a reputable supplier? Companies displaying the logo of the Registered Safety Supplier (RSS) scheme. Should have signed a binding declaration that the safety equipment they offer meets all the correct standards.
- Is the **CE** present on the product marking/labelling and is it in the correct font and at least 5mm high?
- For high risk products, including respirators and chemical protective clothing, is the **CE** mark accompanied by a 4-digit number?
- Were written instructions for use provided with the product and are they printed in clear text, understandable and available in English?
- Is the name and address of the manufacturer detailed on the user instructions?

EC-Type Examination Certificate for the specific product in question. These are a legal requirement and are issued by bodies approved by the European Commission. The certificate should show that the product has been tested to EU standards. It should have a clear description of the product and the manufacturers name and address. If there is any doubt about the authenticity of the certificate the employer should speak directly to the notified body that is named on the certificate.

If there is still any doubt the employer can contact the British Safety Industry Federation on 01442 248744 for advice.

If there is any doubt, make sure that your employer contact the supplier and asks for an EC Declaration of Conformity or

Find out more

For more information about the campaign, go to:
tuc.org.uk/union-reps