Labor Management Safety Committee (LMSC) - August 4, 2010 Safety Message

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

You may have heard the term "PPE" – but do you know what it means? Do you know that proper use of personal protective equipment may prevent you from being injured seriously or maybe injured at all? Do you have the PPE that you need for your job? Do you wear your PPE?

Hopefully, the answers to all of the above questions are "Yes".

Personal protective equipment (PPE) refers to protective clothing, helmets, masks, respirators, safety vests, goggles, eye wear, hearing protection, gloves, boots, hardhats or any other garment or object designed to protect the wearer's body from injury by blunt objects, electrical hazards, heat, chemicals, infection or other job related hazards.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defined the conditions under which certain types of personal protective equipment must be worn or used. These categories include eye and face protection, respiratory protection, head protection, foot protection, electrical protective devices, hand protection, fall systems, positioning devices and other types of protective measures. Each employer is obligated to enforce the use of PPE not only because it is the law, but because it is for the safety of you – the employee.

Each department or office has defined what PPE should or must be worn for each type of position or each type of work environment. If you do not know what PPE you should be wearing or using, talk to your supervisor or manager.

- Wear your safety vests when working in roadways or construction zones.
- Wear a hard hat where required.
- Wear your ear plugs or other noise protection anywhere there are loud noises.
- Wear your safety glasses when working with chemicals, grinding or cutting equipment, when working underneath a piece of equipment or at any other time you are concerned that debris could get into your eyes.
- Wear a respirator or mask any time there is a risk of breathing in hazardous chemicals, dust, fumes or other irritating odors.
- Wear gloves or other type of hand protection when working with hand tools, cutting or grinding equipment, animals, abrasive materials, blood or other bodily fluids or chemicals.
- Wear appropriate footwear in the workplace. Non-skid shoes are recommended. If working in areas where there is a likelihood of objects falling on you consider steel toed shoes.

Take a moment to examine your own PPE. If the items you normally wear are worn, torn or damaged, consider replacing the item.

If you feel that your position or job function needs additional personal protective equipment, talk to your supervisor or manager or bring up the issue to your department's Safety Committee representatives.

Remember Safety is No Accident!