

Personal Protective Equipment

tions Satisfactory performance specifications exist for certain types of personal protective equipment, notably safety hats, devices to protect the eyes from impact and from harmful radiations, and rubber insulating gloves, but there are no approving laboratories to test equipment regularly according to these specifications

Unless the safety professional has ample testing facilities available to him, he must rely upon the equipment manufacturers' endorsement for devices that may fill his needs. Fortunately, the manufacturers have been aware of their responsibility in this respect, and have a remarkable record of reliability. Their representatives can usually be called in to demonstrate their products and discuss their conformance to safety standards

The succeeding pages discuss seven major areas of personal protective equipment—head, eyes and face, ear, respiratory, hands, feet, and body. Each section will provide the latest information on the standards available or proposed, some details about the equipment available, suggestions for selecting equipment to meet the job hazard, and some case histories in the development and use of specific devices

Use equipment properly

The next problem is that of having workers wear personal protective equipment, once it has been chosen. Several factors influence the solution of this problem. Among them are (a) the extent to which the men who must wear the equipment understand its necessity, (b) the ease and comfort with which it can be worn with a minimum of interference with normal work procedures, and (c) the available economic, social, and disciplinary sanctions which can be used to influence the attitudes of the men

In an organization where workers are accustomed to wearing personal protective equipment as a condition of employment, this problem is minor. The men are simply issued equipment which meets the requirements of the job and is easy to wear, and are taught how and why it must be used. Thereafter, periodic checks are made until use of the issued equipment has become a matter of habit with the workers

When a group of men are issued personal

protective equipment for the first time or when new devices are introduced, the problem may be more difficult. The men will need to be given a clear and reasonable explanation as to why the equipment must be worn. Traditional work procedures may have to be changed. If such changes are required, a good deal of resistance, justifiable or not, may be generated. Also, workers may be reluctant to use the equipment because of bravado or vanity

The practice of having supervisors and foremen try out new protective equipment and devices prior to actual adoption, and getting their comments and discussing the advantages, has been successfully used in many operations

A good deal of the resistance to change can be overcome if the men are allowed to choose the particular style of equipment they will wear from a group of different styles which have been preselected to meet the job requirements. In some situations, it may be advisable to have a committee from the work force help select suitable devices. Management's desire to standardize on one style of equipment may not be realized immediately, and several styles may need to be stocked. In the latter case, the cost, though higher than the cost of stocking only one style, will be small compared to the potential cost of accidents resulting from failure to use the equipment

For the convenience of their employees, some companies maintain equipment stores on the plant premises (Fig. 38-1)

Policies differ with respect to who pays for personal protective equipment. The cost of eye protection equipment that has prescription-ground lenses, such as safety spectacles, is often shared by worker and employer. For instance, a National Safety Council survey showed that 27 per cent of the companies supplying employees with prescription goggles gave them free, and 60 per cent assumed part of the cost or made them available at below retail

Most companies do not furnish safety toe shoes free. Many industrial firms maintain shoe stores for the convenience of employees and make the shoes available at cost. In some instances, to encourage purchases, safety shoes are offered at below-cost prices

In some areas, shoemobile service is avail-