

Why Use PPE?



A fire party would never think about fighting a conflagration without wearing all required safety equipment. The same attention to detail for self-protection must be followed when working with hazardous material.

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One comment I often hear aboard ship when I conduct the NavOSH and hazmat portion of safety surveys is, “I’ve been doing this for a long time, I don’t really need to wear any PPE.” This usually comes from a senior petty officer who has been working in the hazmat or paint locker for a while. To hear such a comment bothers me because I know they probably pass this attitude to junior Sailors.

After working with hazmat for a while, Sailors do become lax about using PPE. They stock hazmat containers on shelves or dispense hazmat in secondary containers without using PPE. Sailors walk by shipmates who are chipping and painting,

or working with hydraulic fluid or cleansers, without wearing eye protection—and no one says a word.

For these Sailors, following are excerpts from afloat mishaps reported to the Naval Safety Center.

A mishap victim stripped a deck for approximately 12 hours over a two-day period. He wore plastic dental gloves instead of the required chemical gloves. The next day his hands burned so the Sailor went to sick call; he had chemical burns on both hands.

Another Sailor was stocking shelves in the flammable store-room without wearing chemical goggles, although his supervisor had earlier instructed him to wear

the goggles. Reaching for a can of thinner from a shelf, the Sailor accidentally hit the stock securing bar. As his arm jerked, residue from the can splashed onto his face.

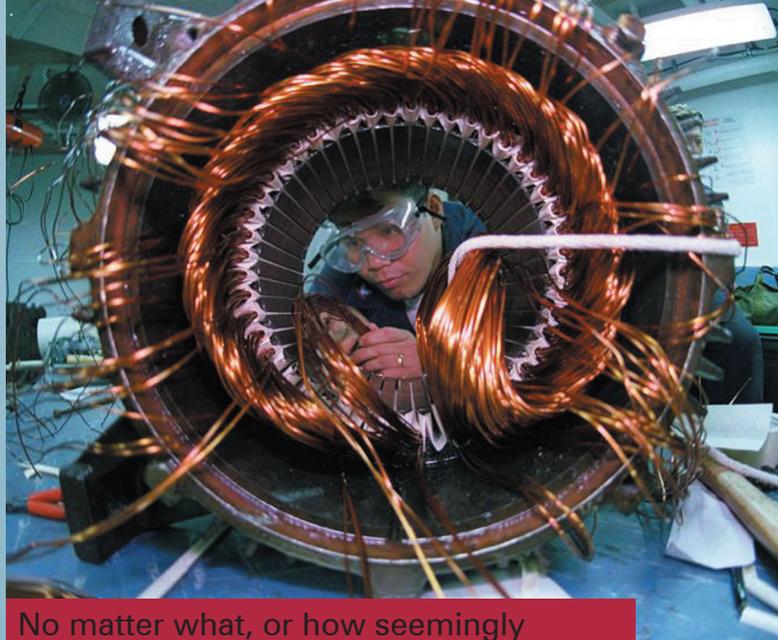
In another situation, a Sailor was using paint thinner and sandpaper to remove paint from a pipe in a JP-5 pump room. While working, he lifted his goggles and paint thinner splashed into his right eye.

Another Sailor was spray-painting inside a berthing compartment, and when he removed his goggles to check the quality of his work, paint from the overhead dripped into his left eye.

Another Sailor was painting the bilges without good eye protection: He was wearing damaged, general-purpose, industrial safety glasses instead of the required chemical goggles. One lens in the broken safety glasses was not properly attached to the frames—the Sailor knew this before he began his work. Nonetheless, he pressed on, and while the Sailor was working, the damaged lens popped out from the frames. The Sailor then stopped painting and began to exit the bilge. While he was leaving,



Simply wearing gloves isn't enough when handling caustic liquids and other hazmat. They must be the proper gloves, and other indicated PPE must comply with NavOSH guidelines. Don't take shortcuts.



No matter what, or how seemingly simple, the job at hand may be -- if it requires specific PPE, wear it! Personal protective equipment requirements exist for a reason. The Sailor who considers PPE an inconvenience is the one most likely to get injured.

he dropped the can of primer he was carrying, and it splashed into his unprotected eyes.

A shortcut got to another Sailor. He was stowing a gallon of cleaning solution in the cleaning gear locker and dropped the container on the deck. Someone had punched a hole into the container to make it easier to pour and cleaning solution splashed into the Sailor's right eye.

Carelessness and not wearing PPE made a believer out of another Sailor. While coiling a pressurized spray paint hose, he accidentally hit the spray gun trigger and sprayed paint into his face and eyes—he was not wearing eye protection.

Another Sailor got an eyeful of hydraulic fluid while conducting catapult preventive maintenance checks. He was checking a launch-valve assembly and wasn't wearing eye protection.

Also on the flight deck aboard a different ship, two Sailors were fueling aircraft when fuel began dumping out of a starboard, vertical-stabilizer dump valve. They immediately shut down the fuel system and disconnected the nozzle. One of the refuelers removed his goggles to better see, and fuel dripped into his eyes. His partner, meanwhile, kept his goggles on, but he had cut the side to prevent fogging and fuel also dripped into his eyes.

One Sailor simply removed his goggles because they had fogged, and he continued painting without

eye protection. Spray from roller went into his right eye.

A Sailor in a hurry had finished spraying inside his ship, and was, in fact, wearing a respirator and chemical protective goggles. When he finished, he removed his PPE and began cleaning his gear in paint thinner. Because he wanted to go on liberty, he deviated from his normal routine of wearing eye protection until he had disposed of the thinner. While cleaning his spray gun, he dropped it into the container of thinner, which splashed into his eyes.

Chapter B12 of OpNavInst. 5100.19D addresses PPE requirements for specific tasks. A ship's industrial hygiene survey also specifies individual work-center PPE responsibilities.

All hands should know to wear appropriate PPE to carry out their work. Division officers and other supervisors must be sure PPE is maintained, and that their Sailors have been trained in PPE use. The chain of command is responsible for maintaining a shipboard inventory of required PPE.

In closing, personal protective equipment use and maintenance is everyone's responsibility. Take, for instance, eye protection. If you don't think it's important for the sake of protecting your two eyes, ask the fellow who has only one. ☺

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