



Personal Protective Equipment

Selecting the Right PPE for Disaster Relief. A Selection Guide For Disaster Cleanup Workers

Brought To You by Honeywell Safety Products | Jul 05, 2023

While any work environment can pose potential safety hazards, even veteran workers facing the extraordinary experience of a disaster cleanup effort may encounter new and different risks. Although the catastrophic event itself may have passed and the affected area approved for re-entry, the worksite itself likely, literally, remains a disaster area. Workers are advised to refer to proper governmental regulatory and corporate authorities for specific directions and mandates on work rules and procedures – as well as to employ best practices in their selection and use of personal protective equipment in their continuing support of a worksite-wide culture of safety.

Worksite Safety

In case an accident does occur, the availability of on-site CSA-compliant Honeywell First Aid Kits can assist workers with the treatment of a wide variety of worksite-related injuries.

The presence of moving vehicles and equipment in and around disaster cleanup sites can pose a myriad of hazards for workers and others. Accessories such as barricade tape, cones, flags, and traffic vests can provide added visibility to area hazards and increase safety in the management of worksite traffic.

Head Protection

Entering a damaged structure exposes workers to a variety of overhead risks including flying or falling objects, power lines, equipment, tools, and similar hazards.

Choosing the right hard hat is key to effective head protection. Hard hat impact protection is divided into two categories: Type I and Type II. Type I hard hats are designed to reduce the force of impact from a blow to the top of the head (e.g. an object falling from above the worker). Type II hard hats are designed to reduce the effect of the lateral force exerted on the head.

The proper and consistent use of a hard hat is vital to user safety. Lightweight high-impact materials and a snug and comfortable fit are essential. A good quality suspension (the support frame) within the

hard hat is important.

Eye & Face Protection

"Struck by" injuries encompass all areas of the body but, from an injury perspective, some of the most serious relate to the eyes, face, and head.

Where eye safety hazards exist, it is essential to provide protective eyewear that is compliant with CSA, UL, and other applicable eye protection standards that cover protective eyeglasses, goggles, and visors. In the aftermath of a disaster, work activity in a dirty, damaged structure can cause particles such as dust and soot to become airborne – and a safety risk to workers' eyes. Sealed eyewear is ideal for protection against airborne debris as well as from impact, the sun, and the wind. Sealed eyewear provides protection for wearers of prescription glasses.

Models with extended wraparound frames improve protection and peripheral vision. Flexible width sizes, and adjustable nose bridge, and ratcheting temple hinges that enable the wearer to customize the fit and lens angle increase comfort and promote usage. Anti-fog lenses help preserve vision where exertion, heat, and humidity exist.

Hearing Protection

Most worksites are enveloped by the sounds of working tools, equipments, and heavy machinery – and many present the risk of permanent, noise-induced hearing loss.

Effective hearing protection reduces the level of sound exposure to permissible limits while allowing users to maintain real-time personal communication and situation awareness for their personal efficiency and safety.

There are many options for hearing protection. Selection factors include noise exposure and desired protection levels, product type (earplug or earmuff), style (single/multiple uses, banded, etc.) and other product features (size, corded, sound management, etc.). Training and testing help users ensure the proper fit of the hearing protector and the desired level of protection. Regardless of the type, the chosen hearing protection should be compliant with CSA Z1007 for hearing conservation.

Respiratory Protection

Physical injuries are not the only hazard in a cleanup effort. It is important to protect the lungs because various gases, toxic chemicals, fumes, and particles can remain airborne long after a catastrophic event has passed or a structural fire is extinguished.

Those working on a clean-up, refurbishment, and construction teams are strongly advised to wear respiratory protection. Asbestos and silica are leading respiratory hazards and a cause of ill health on the job site, often inhaled as dust during demolition and refurbishment activities. Respiratory protection is also vital when drilling, painting, and cutting concrete or working with sand and concrete. Ways to reduce inhalation risks can include changing working practices, for example by adding water when cutting concrete to reduce dust. Single use, reusable face masks, half-face or full-face respirators or ventilated hoods are available to prevent dust inhalation.

Fall Protection

Falls from height represent the leading risk factor for serious injury or death at the worksite. To reduce the risk, consider the following series of options.

First, if possible, avoid work at height. Many accidents occur at low levels where the risk of a fall has not been considered. Secondly, prevent falls with the use of collective fall protection. Thirdly, specify Personal Fall Protection Equipment (PFPE) for individuals working at height to reduce the potential (restraint) and to reduce the effects of a fall (fall arrest). Selecting the right type of fall arrest equipment is vital for all three components of the PFPE system: Anchor point (permanent or temporary), body wear (harness, restraint belts) and connecting device (lanyards, rope grabs). When specifying PFPE, consider the user, the environment, and specific application. Proper training, inspections, and maintenance are always required. A rescue plan and qualified individuals should be in place at the worksite.

Electrical Safety

Structurally-damaged facilities pose multiple varieties of electrical hazards that require a full array of linemen PPE.

Utility and electrical workers must also protect themselves by wearing rubber insulating gloves with leather protectors, and head protection including face shields and hard hats. Temporary grounding equipment, voltage detectors, and insulating sticks are essential tools for the work zone.

The first order of business is to remove occupants and cut electrical power to the severely affected area, allowing the first responder cleanup team to sweep through and begin the assembly of the new infrastructure. Power and gas services won't be re-established until all cleanup and ground restoration work has been completed.

Download Honeywell's production selection guide for disaster cleanup workers to learn more about the PPE you need to keep your workers safe.

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