

■ Toolbox Talk: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

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Purpose

To reduce the risk of injury when hazards cannot be eliminated and PPE is the final layer of protection.

What is PPE?

PPE is equipment or clothing worn to protect the user from known hazards, such as gloves, goggles, hi-vis, safety boots, face masks, and harnesses.

Why It Matters

- It's the last line of defence when other controls can't fully eliminate risk.
- Common risks in window cleaning include chemical exposure, slips, falling objects, and weather exposure.

Employer Responsibilities

- Provide PPE free of charge
- Ensure compatibility and suitability
- Provide training and information
- Maintain and replace PPE as needed
- Include PPE in risk assessments

Employee Responsibilities

- Wear PPE as instructed
- Care for and store PPE correctly
- Report damage or loss
- Never work without required PPE

Limitations of PPE

- Only protects the user
- Must be worn and used correctly
- Must be in good condition to work effectively

Examples for Window Cleaners

- Gloves for chemical handling
- Eye protection from spray or debris
- Non-slip, waterproof footwear
- Harnesses for rope access
- High-visibility gear on public sites

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WCA Member Disclaimer

This Toolbox Talk is a WCA-provided template and is intended for informational use only. It does not replace a workplace-specific risk assessment, COSHH assessment, or formal training. Employers remain responsible for ensuring PPE is suitable, maintained, and used in line with UK HSE PPE regulations. The WCA accepts no liability for injury, enforcement action, or damage resulting from the use or misuse of this document.

Recommended HSE Sources

- HSE: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at Work – <https://www.hse.gov.uk/ppe/index.htm>
- HSE: Managing Health and Safety – <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/index.htm>
- HSE: Selecting PPE – <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/ppe.htm>