

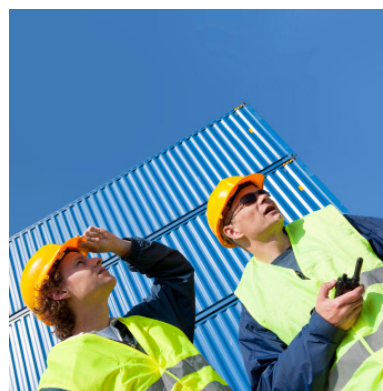
When watching a hockey game, probably the last thing you think about is safety. What with all the stick and puck injuries and fights, you may think that safety isn't even a consideration.

Think about all the gear they wear – helmet with cage mask or face shield, shoulder pads, body protector, elbow pads, gloves, padded pants, and shin pads are required by all players. Goalies are even further protected. This protective gear has gradually become required wear for professional hockey players to prevent crippling or disabling injury.

You may be required to wear protective gear, too. Ear plugs or muffs, hard hat, safety goggles, safety shoes or boots, and gloves may be required. Although this gear can't prevent things like equipment breaking or the inattention of another worker, it can prevent you from being hurt by it.

For instance, if another worker drops a board on your head, your hard hat will help protect you. If your foot is run over by a forklift, safety boots can prevent your toes from getting crushed. Deciding to disregard the safety gear requirement can cost you a severe injury to one of your body parts.

Safety gear may seem uncomfortable, bulky, or a nuisance at first and can be difficult when you are first learning to wear them. Some workers try not to wear them at all unless a supervisor is looking. Do you remember when you first started using a seat belt?



# PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

It seemed uncomfortable and, frankly, a pain in the rear end to wear it. But now, since you've been wearing it for so long you feel insecure if you don't buckle up. Wearing safety gear can be like that.

Standard complaints can be made when a new worker begins to wear his safety gear. We frequently hear, "It weighs too much!" or "I get a bad headache!" or "It hurts my eyes!" or "They're too cold" or "too hot" and the list goes on. Often these complaints are just excuses because the worker doesn't want to comply with safety regulations.

At times these complaints are valid. An ill-fitting hard hat, safety goggles, or ear muffs can indeed cause a headache or pain.

If this is the case for you, see your supervisor so he can have it adjusted or perhaps refitted. An overwhelming majority of the time, though, the complaints are caused by unwillingness to get over the "newness" of the equipment.

If a worker is reminded that he will benefit from wearing the equipment and that it greatly contributes to his success on the job, he will adjust more quickly. Once he realizes that it really does protect him from a severe injury, he will be more amenable to wearing it consistently.

Safety gear has found a place in construction, manufacturing, sports, and many other jobs. We workers must recognize that safety gear has an appropriate place in our life, too.

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