



'Full PPE' shouldn't be a catch-all solution

When it comes to control measures for workplace risks, we know that there's a clear hierarchy of responses. Once a risk assessment has highlighted hazards in your workplace, the first aim should always be to eliminate them.

If this is not possible, then you look to replace the risk factor, isolate it, or separate individuals from the risk through barriers and routines. In other words, you should always take the most comprehensive form of protection possible ([Read More](#))

against the risk they pose.

Sadly, this is not an approach adhered to by all businesses. For those who still see health & safety as something of a burden, adherence to proper safety protocols remains ad-hoc. Even those who carry out risk assessments and instigate risk management don't always do so in a rigorous manner.

A case in point is the term 'full PPE', which seems to crop up regularly now, even appearing on signage. As a recommendation and a decree, this means very little. Wearing every possible item of PPE is practically impossible, and says very little about the unique requirements of each workplace.

If anything, the use of 'full PPE' as a control measure can reflect a lack of attention on the part of a business. It communicates that PPE is a primary safety precaution in itself, rather than an emergency fall back. It is not uncommon to find a site where 'full PPE' is mandatory and risk reporting is comprehensive, yet the overarching approach to safety is neglectful.

PPE is extremely valuable, but its importance should not be emphasised to the point of over-reliance. As with the hierarchy of control measures, the priority should lie with training, risk prevention, and a commitment to safe working practices. All of these measures can stamp out risks, rather than protecting against their inevitable consequence.

Above all, make sure that 'full PPE' is not the extent of your approach to site safety. Specify the PPE your employees require, explain why it is necessary, and seek at all points to eliminate the risks that it protects against. When it comes to safety, there should be no half measures.

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