Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Arrangement

Contents:

1.0 Statement of purpose/objectives

This arrangement will assist in meeting the Council's value to focus on meeting the needs of our customers and also to meet the legislative requirements.
Shropshire Council will carry out its objectives through:

1.1 Carrying out suitable and sufficient risk assessment of tasks where substances hazardous to health are or may be present.

1.2 Providing adequate and suitable Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) where the risk assessment shows it is required as one of the measures to control the risks from substances hazardous to health.

1.3 Ensuring that all personnel required to wear close fitting RPE, i.e. sealing to the user's face, undergo a face fit test with the chosen RPE.

1.4 Ensuring that all persons required to wear RPE are trained in its use.

1.5 Ensuring that all non-disposable RPE is maintained and tested regularly and is cleaned after use and stored appropriately.

2.0 Scope

The scope of this arrangement is to provide a framework by which Shropshire Council can fulfil its duty under Health and Safety Legislation where those working are required to be provided with Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE).

Shropshire Council employees may encounter hazardous airborne contaminants as a result of their work. The contaminants may be of chemical, fumes, vapours or gases, dust, fibres or biological origin, and may cause serious respiratory harm to individuals if they are not properly protected.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 requires that where prevention of exposure to hazardous substances is not reasonably practicable it must be adequately controlled. Risk assessment will indicate which control procedures are required and most suitable type of correct RPE.
Where engineering measures e.g. local exhaust ventilation, or other control measures fail to adequately control airborne exposure, RPE will need to be provided to ensure any residual exposure to hazardous airborne substances are below concentrations harmful to health.

3.0 Definition

For the purpose of this arrangement, RPE is defined as;
"A particular type of personal protective equipment designed to protect the wearer from breathing in harmful substances or from oxygen-deficient atmospheres when other controls are either not possible or insufficient on their own".

4.0 Duty of care

Shropshire Council has a general duty of care to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees and non-employees so far as is reasonably practicable.

5.0 Implementation

Management guidance in the form of Frequently Asked Questions will be provided and updated to support the implementation of the arrangement.

6.0 Compliance

This arrangement will enable Shropshire Council to conform to statutory requirements and best current practice. Further references are provided in Appendix 1.

7.0 Review of Arrangement

This arrangement will be reviewed by Health and Safety Team every 3 years

Consultation/Approving Bodies

Health, Safety & Welfare Group – January 2016
Reviewed by the Health and Safety Team - May 2020

Frequently Asked Questions

Contents:

1. What are the arrangements for securing the health and safety of workers?

1.1 A suitable and sufficient assessment should be carried out of any work which may present a risk to health before that work is undertaken.

This should be done by a Manager/Supervisor or other person competent to make the assessment.

The risk assessment will indicate the measures necessary to control the risks to personnel from the substances hazardous to health. Under the hierarchy of control, RPE should only be used as a last resort when selecting appropriate control measures – engineering controls protect everyone in the workplace, RPE only protects the person wearing it. Also, if worn incorrectly or badly maintained it may not offer the protection assumed. If all other measures fail to control the risk, then the use of RPE may be considered.

Hierarchy of control

- **Elimination** Redesign the job or substitute a substance
- **Substitution** Replace material with a less hazardous one
- **Enclosure:** Install or use additional machinery such as local exhaust ventilation to control risk
- **RPE:** Only after all the previous measures have been tried and found ineffective in controlling risks to a reasonably practicable level, must RPE be used

However, RPE may also be used:

i) For emergency work, e.g. breakdown, maintenance, spills;

ii) To escape in an emergency or to rescue people in danger;

iii) As additional protection in case all other measures fail to operate.

2. Types of RPE

2.1 Where RPE is provided, it must be chosen by a person competent to do so. This person should have attended a recognised RPE awareness course, for example, a course run by the following companies:

- Fire Safe International http://www.firesafeinternational.co.uk/training/
- Arco http://www.atandc.co.uk/training-courses/respiratory-protection-equipment/

The RPE chosen must be adequate and suitable. There are two types of RPE (Please see HSE's Respiratory protective equipment at work, HSG53 for detailed/pictorial descriptions):

i) Respirators:

a) It may have a filter fitted to remove contaminants and be tight fitting to form a seal with the user's face;

b) It may have a loose-fitting hood connected to a powered air filtering unit.

Respirators must never be used in confined spaces, areas of low oxygen levels or very high containment levels.

ii) Breathing apparatus

These use breathing quality air from a source such as an air cylinder or an air compressor. There are a variety of types of breathing apparatus from a half mask with an airline, to a full-face mask with a demand valve and compressed air cylinder.

In order for RPE to be adequate it must be able to reduce the exposure to a hazard to the level required to protect the wearer's health.
In order for RPE to be suitable it must be right for the wearer, the task and environment such that the wearer can work freely and without additional risk due to the RPE.

Consideration should be given, for example, as to whether workers have any pre-existing medical conditions e.g. breathing disorders such as asthma which may restrict or prevent some workers wearing any, or certain types of RPE, whether or not the wearer has facial hair or markings that could prevent a good seal between the wearer's face and the RPE. In cases such as these, other options such as RPE with a loose-fitting face piece e.g. a hood or helmet or breathing apparatus must be considered.

Only CE marked equipment should be selected. The manufacturers and suppliers will then be able to supply information on RPE performance, how it should be labelled and what instructions should be supplied with the equipment. CE marking does not however make it automatically suitable for the task.

See Reference 6.3 for selecting RPE, using RPE, including fit testing and maintaining RPE for further information.

3. What is 'face fit tested?'

3.1 Any personnel required to wear RPE must be 'face fit tested' to ensure that the choice of RPE with a tight-fitting face piece is able to adequately protect that person. A record must be kept of each fit test.

Face piece fit testing is a method of testing that the face piece of the RPE seals adequately to the wearer's face.

If the chosen RPE fails the face fit test (i.e. it is not compatible with the wearer) provision of an alternative respirator should be explored, or alternatively provision of adequate and suitable breathing apparatus must be made. https://www.hse.gov.uk/respiratory-protective-equipment/fit-testing-basics.htm

4. Who should carry out the face fit testing?

4.1 The persons carrying out the face fit testing must be competent to do so. The person must have attended a recognised Face Fit testing course or have achieved the competency required by the British Safety Industry Federation Fit 2 Fit accreditation scheme (details available at http://www.bsif.co.uk/fit2fit). The following companies provide Face Fit training:

- Fire Safe International http://www.firesafeinternational.co.uk/training/
- Arco http://www.atandc.co.uk/training-courses/respiratory-protection-equipment/

The competent "face fit tester" will train the user in the correct use of the RPE at the time of face fit testing.

5. How often should face fit testing be repeated

5.1 Face fit testing will need to be repeated at regular intervals (the interval chosen should be based on risk) or if:

i) There is a change to a different type of RPE or different type of face piece.

ii) There are any changes to a person's face through e.g. weight loss/gain, scarring etc.

Consultation with the users of the RPE must take place at all of the above stages to ensure that the RPE is as comfortable as possible to wear, taking into account the tasks to be carried out and working conditions when the RPE must be worn.

6. Adequate Supervision

6.1 Personnel provided with RPE must have adequate supervision to ensure that they are using the RPE correctly.

7. Cleaning and storage

7.1 Non-disposable RPE must be cleaned and stored correctly after use according to the manufacturer's instructions.

8 Maintenance frequency

8.1 The RPE must be maintained and tested as advised by the manufacturer (at least monthly) or discarded. Records of any maintenance and testing must be kept. RPE or any materials used to clean the RPE may be considered to be hazardous waste and must be disposed of appropriately.

9 Radioactive substances, asbestos or lead

9.1 Those working with radioactive substances, asbestos or lead should consult the relevant legislation and Approved Codes of Practice when considering the use of RPE. However, in all cases this arrangement should be followed for face fit testing of respirators with tight fitting face pieces.

10. Information and training

10.1 Managers will give sufficient information, instruction and training to ensure the health and safety of workers using RPE, which includes temporary staff, persons gaining work experience with the service area and contractors, as well as those in direct employment. Managers and supervisors who are responsible for users of RPE will also receive appropriate training.

11. Record keeping

Records should be kept of the following:

11.1 The results of the RPE assessment
11.2 Actions taken as a result of RPE assessment
11.3 Inventory of RPE equipment and to whom each item has been supplied.
11.4 The provision of training.
11.5 Information given to employees.
11.6 Complaints or alleged reports of discomfort or non-suitability of the RPE discovered following field tests or surveys.
11.7 Action taken in respect of such complaints.
11.8 Manufacturers' advice with regard to compatibility of various items of RPE which are used together.
11.9 Replacement of RPE with dates.
11.10 Maintenance and testing of RPE.

12. References

12.1 Control of Substances Hazardous to Health. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended). Approved Code of Practice and Guidance - L5 (Sixth edition).
12.2 Personal protective equipment at work (Third edition). Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (as amended). Guidance on Regulations.
12.3 Respiratory Protective Equipment at work. A practical guide. HSG53 (Fourth Edition, published 2013).
12.4 Managing and working with asbestos. Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. Approved Code of Practice and Guidance L143 (Second Edition, published 2013).
12.5 Control of Lead at Work (Third Edition). Control of Lead at Work Regulations 2002. Approved Code of Practice and Guidance L132 (Third Edition, published 2002).
12.6 Work with ionising radiation. Ionising Radiation Regulations 2017. Approved Code of Practice and Guidance L121 (Second edition - updated 2017).
12.7 Website: Health and Safety Executive – “Is your mask protecting you” HSE Pocket Card - INDG460 (2013).