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A guide to

Staff uniforms and

OH&S compliance

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This document has been prepared by AlSCO Pty Ltd as a basic guide to assist employers in making an informed OH&S decision regarding the use of personal protective clothing. For an exhaustive understanding of the employers work place responsibilities please refer to workcover, the National Safety Council of Australia and the AS/NZ 4602:1999 standards.

What is my duty of care?

[By law, you must provide a safe and healthy workplace for your workers and contractors.

This includes:

- providing and maintaining safe plant (such as machinery and equipment) and safe systems of work (such as controlling entry to high risk areas, controlling work pace and frequency and providing systems to prevent falls from heights.)
- implementing arrangements for the safe use, handling, storage and transport of plant and substances (such as dangerous goods and harmful chemicals or materials.)
- maintaining the safe condition of the workplace (such as ensuring fire exits are not blocked, emergency equipment is serviceable, and general housekeeping.)
- providing workers and contractors with adequate facilities (such as clean toilets, cool and clean drinking water, and hygienic eating areas.)
- making sure workers have adequate information, instruction, training and supervision to work in a safe and healthy manner.

Workcover.vic.gov.au]

How do I provide an appropriate level of safety at my work place?

First you need to conduct a safety audit and do a risk assessment to establish what needs to be done to provide a safe working environment.

This risk assessment will need to be retained on file by you to justify the safety measures employed at your work place.

You would then need to implement the risk assessments recommendations. At one end of the spectrum it might mean installing higher watt light bulbs and at the other end of the spectrum you may need a range of systems, work place process reforms and personal protection equipment.

How do I conduct a risk assessment for my site?

[The key factors to consider when evaluating risk assessments are:

- they are based on the likelihood of an injury, illness or incident occurring and its consequences,
- they reflect the current state of knowledge about the particular hazard,
- they are conducted by persons competent in the chosen methodology,
- they involve consultation with employees and/or their representatives,
- they are documented and recorded, and
- they comply with current OHS legislation, codes of practice, standards etc.

While your own records of past incidents and discussions with your employees can assist with this part of the process, you may also need to look wider by contacting a trade or industry association, your local regulatory authority, equipment manufacturers or suppliers, or a technically qualified consultant. A lot of valuable information is also available via the internet. More than likely you will need to make a judgment based on a number of these factors and it will help if you record what these were.

The main focus during an audit should be on the outcomes achieved from the risk assessment process, i.e. the hazard controls in place, and their effectiveness. It is also important that the system verifies that hazard controls are monitored to ensure that they remain in place and continue to be effective.

Employers must:

- pay for all personal protective equipment.
- ensure each item of personal protective equipment is appropriate for each particular workplace hazard.
- ensure each item of personal protective equipment is appropriate for each individual worker.
- provide training in the appropriate use of personal protective equipment.
provide additional training to supervisors to ensure they understand their role in enforcing the wearing and use of personal protective equipment.
ensure all personal protective equipment meets the appropriate standards.
- ensure all personal protective equipment is cleaned and adequately maintained. **Workcover.vic.gov.au]**

AlSCO can help you to conduct an assessment. This is free of charge and follows the guidelines of the National Safety Council of Australia (NSCA).

When do I have to provide high visibility uniforms?

[Personal protective equipment should be regarded as a temporary measure or a last resort. It should only be used when other risk control measures do not adequately control exposure or are not practicable.

Personal protective equipment may be necessary:

- where other control measures do not provide adequate control.
- where a risk assessment indicates personal protective equipment is necessary as a temporary measure to reduce employee exposure to an acceptable level until such time as adequate control is achieved by other means.
- in emergencies where urgent action is required (e.g. a plant failure or chemical spill), or
- during some infrequent maintenance operation where the short duration of the task makes other control measures impractical.

Workcover.vic.gov.au]

What is the Aust standard for high visibility clothing?

There are different levels in design. Your risk assessment will dictate what level to use. The highest standard or level has been set as AS/NZ 4602:1999. This standard has been produced as a way to set a top "bench mark" in uniforms and materials used to make them. **Your specific OH&S, work place needs will be determined by your risk assessment and not by AS/NZ 4602:1999.**

AS/NZ 4602:1999.

- **Class D-** a garment for outdoor **day time use only**, comprising fluorescent or other non-retro reflective high visibility material.

Class D fluorescent uniforms by their nature are poly-cotton and for use only in non flame work environments. **Once in use or washed the fluorescent material used to make this uniform may not meet the required standards AS/NZS 1906.4. A cost effective system for post sale or use evaluation is not currently available or practicable.**

Class D non-retro reflective high visibility material is made from a natural fiber material, (100% cotton) and is for use in flame situations. See below "The use of personal protective equipment garments in a high flame environment".

- **Class N-** a garment for **night time use only**, retro reflective elements on an unspecified background.
- **Class D/N-** a garment for both **day and night**, comprising retro reflective elements on a fluorescent or other non-retro reflective high visibility background material.

The use of personal protective equipment garments in a high flame environment

All personal protective equipment needs to be issued in line with your risk assessment for the work undertaken. As such it may be deemed that the polyester in the uniform is a greater risk of burning than the risk of the wearer being hit due to poor visibility. Especially work that involves welding, grinding or smelting.

IE primary risk is burning and the secondary risk is impact with a moving object.

This risk situation can be managed by using a two tone orange and navy blue 100% cotton uniform, as well as the appropriate leather aprons. For smelting you may need to use a propane impregnated or nomex uniform which provides greater levels of flame resistance or retardant properties than 100% cotton. See the next section- What are the different types of uniforms?

What are the different types of uniforms?

Each different personal protective equipment uniform has a different function and used in the management of different risks. The appropriate style for you to use will be dictated by your risk assessment and practicability (IE cost versus risk assessment ratio).

- **Two tone 100% Cotton (low-medium impact risk areas but used in a low flame situation)**

This uniform is 100% cotton and is good at helping to manage high heat and flame situations. The uniform is split into two colour areas. Orange at the top

and navy blue in the lower area. This two tone contrast provides a greater level of visual recognition than a single tone uniform.

- **Two tone 65% polyester, 35% cotton (used in all impact risk areas during day time)**

A garment for outdoor day time use only, comprising fluorescent material and a contrasting colour.

- **Retro reflective (used in all impact risk areas during night time)**

A garment for **night time use only**, retro reflective elements on an unspecified background.

NB this relates to the tape applied onto any coloured uniform to the area requirements in the standards. Class D/N is a combination a of High visibility 65% polyester, 35% cotton uniform with Retro reflective strips attached to the area requirements in the standards.

- **Proban (used in a high flame situations)**

This is a single tone 100% cotton uniform impregnated with a resin and is fire retardant. It will burn but if you remove the heat source from the uniform it will stop burning.

- **Nomex (used in a high flame situations)**

This is a synthetic suite and is fire resistant. It will not burn.