



Certificate No. FM 22786  
BS EN ISO 9001:2015

## PPE Compatibility Statement

### What does PPE compatibility mean?

The ability for items of PPE, when worn simultaneously, not to compromise the fit of one another or to affect the protection that each can offer.

In many workplaces there is a requirement to wear more than one type of PPE at any one time. A construction worker, for example, may need to wear a hard hat, ear muffs, a respirator and safety spectacles; whilst a welder may require a welding shield with ear muffs and a particulate respirator. All of these items of PPE will be individually CE marked and fully approved to the relevant standards but this does not necessarily mean that they will fit well together.

Compatible PPE should be worn in a way that no one item compromises the ability of another to protect the wearer.

It is advisable but not mandatory that same brand/manufactured products of PPE be worn together as all products are tested to ensure that the compatibility does not affect fit or function. Different manufacturer products may fit well together but it is an unknown as to the function being correct.

### What are the risks associated with incompatible PPE?

Incompatible PPE may result in a reduced level of protection. For instance, a disposable particulate respirator which relies on the ability of the product to achieve an adequate seal to the wearer's face may be rendered ineffective if a pair of safety goggles cause the seal to lift away from the nose and cheekbones. Likewise a pair of safety spectacles which sits too high on the wearer's face when worn with RPE may reduce the level of eye protection offered. Eyewear with thick side arms worn with ear muffs can also reduce the attenuation offered by the hearing protection.

Another factor to take into account when considering compatibility is the comfort of the wearer. Compatible PPE should generally be more comfortable when worn correctly than incompatible PPE. Wearers of uncomfortable products will be more likely to readjust them, potentially affecting protection, or remove them altogether. If wearers are constantly moving or adjusting their PPE to make it comfortable or to avoid slippage, this could cause a distraction potentially leading to accidents, or certainly a less productive worker.

### Legislation

The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations state, *“Every employer shall ensure that where the presence of more than one risk to health or safety makes it necessary for his employee to wear or use simultaneously more than one item of personal protective equipment, such equipment is compatible and continues to be effective against the risk or risks in question.”*

The guidance notes explain, “If more than one item of PPE is to be worn, they must be compatible with each other and when used together, should adequately control the risks”. Additionally, respirator wearers must wear other PPE, which may influence the face seal, when undergoing a fit test. A fit test pass indicates that the respirator is able to achieve an adequate seal on the wearers face when worn with that PPE.

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Training, as always, is a key factor in helping to achieve compatibility. Wearers should be able to fit their PPE correctly and understand the importance of good fit of all products and continuous wear whilst in the hazardous area.

### What are the benefits of compatible PPE?

- Protected workforce
- Legal compliance
- Increased likelihood of productive workforce
- If trials were conducted, feeling of employee involvement/engagement in PPE selection & use decisions
- Comfortable workforce
- Lower incidence of distraction on task in hand

Cost effective PPE (protects your investment)



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