Introduction

Bega Valley Shire Council (BVSC) recognises its responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees. In order to meet the requirements of the Work Health & Safety Act 2011, BVSC is committed to providing appropriate personal protective equipment to all employees who perform duties where protective equipment is required. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) refers to any item (including clothing) issued by Council with the aim of providing personal protection e.g. safety goggles, high visibility clothing, hearing protection.

Scope

This procedure applies to all BVSC employees who are required to perform duties for Council in a field/outdoor environment, and who are required to wear PPE in order to fulfil their duties for Council. The aim of this procedure is to provide guidance and directives relating to the wearing of BVSC issued PPE for outdoor and indoor/field based staff.

References and associated documents

The following documents relate to this procedure:

- Work Health & Safety Act 2011;
- WHS Regulation 2011
- Relevant Australian Standards

Responsibilities

Managers and Coordinators

Managers and Coordinators have the following responsibilities in relation to PPE usage:

- To recognise and accept their direct and immediate responsibility for the health and safety of employees under their control.
- To ensure all employees are provided with, use, wear and maintain PPE as appropriate.
- To ensure all employees are made aware of this procedure relating to PPE and are provided with all that is required prior to commencing work.
- Ensure all staff who report to them are adequately trained in the use of all BVSC issued PPE.
Employees

Employees have the following responsibilities in relation to the issue and use of BVSC issued PPE:

- Following all reasonable instructions given to them relating to health and safety.
- Report all hazards or defects they cannot remedy.
- To ensure all issued items of PPE are worn correctly and maintained.
- To return issued PPE once employment with BVSC ceases.
- Only use PPE provided by BVSC - if there is a deficiency the employee must notify their supervisor prior to job commencement so appropriate PPE can be provided.
- Ensure that all items of PPE are in good repair and are checked daily prior to job commencement.

All employees have a legal obligation to comply with legislation and regulations, which require the use of personal protective clothing and equipment, and to abide by Council guidelines and instructions in their use. If an employee cannot wear protective clothing or use protective equipment for medical or physical reasons, he or she must give Council an explanatory written statement signed by a medical practitioner. In circumstances such as these, Council reserves the right to have the employee assessed by a medical practitioner of Council’s choice. Council also reserves the right to redeploy the employee or take other action if necessary.

In the instance that a particular kind of PPE is not or cannot be provided by BVSC and needs to be obtained through an external supplier, the employee must notify and seek approval from his or her supervisor prior to purchasing the equipment. The purchase of any PPE through an external supplier must be completed in accordance with procedure 5.08.0 Procurement procedures manual. If the supply of PPE is required for specific medical reasons, the employee must provide relevant medical documentation (i.e. a doctor’s referral or certificate) to support the request to purchase a particular piece of PPE.

Hierarchy of Controls

When contemplating the use of PPE as a risk control measure, BVSC must first satisfy the requirements of the WHS Regulation 2011, Clause 36 - in particular, the suitability of other risk control measures. Therefore, before adoption of PPE as a control measure the following needs to be addressed:

- Is it possible to eliminate the hazard?
- If elimination is not possible is it feasible to substitute a lesser hazard?
- If substitution is not possible is it feasible to isolate the effected persons from the hazard?
- If isolation is not possible is it feasible to control the hazard by the use of an engineering means, e.g. guards, lock-out switches?
- If engineering means are not possible or completely effective is it feasible to control the hazard by the introduction of administrative means, e.g. job rotation, increased training, signs, written or verbal direction, procedures, SWMS?
- Is it possible to use a combination of the above risk controlling measures to control the hazard to an acceptable level?
Note

- PPE should ONLY be considered as a control measure after the above process has been completed. It is important to remember, that in accordance with the hierarchy of control measures, PPE is the lowest control and should only be used where risks remain after other control measures have been used or deemed not reasonably practicable.

PPE Selection and General Principles

When selecting personal protective equipment for a particular work process or series of tasks, consider the following general principles:

- Be familiar with the risks of the work process. This will involve evaluating the nature of the risk, the circumstances and restrictions of the tasks to be performed.
- Be aware of the acceptable level of risk to which the worker may be exposed and hence the performance requirement of the chosen equipment. Compare performance requirements with the capability of different types of personal protective equipment.
- Make sure the item chosen is appropriate to the risk. That is, make sure that the item selected will provide an adequate level of protection against the risks present and will not create additional health or safety concerns.
- Where several types of personal protective equipment are required to control multiple risks presented by the one work process make sure that the items are compatible, for example, ear muffs with a hard hat.
- Make sure that the item will fit properly, as ‘inadequate fit’ can limit an item’s protective capability. Respiratory protective equipment, for example, requires a good facial seal (in some instances, facial hair can interfere with the fit of an item). Your selection decision can be influenced by whether the item needs to be individually fitted by a professional.
- Consider workers’ medical conditions, which can influence whether they can use certain items of equipment. For example, safety glasses may not be suitable for use by a person who wears vision correcting spectacles.
- Consider the comfort of the item when choosing equipment. Comfort is an important factor in ensuring its use.
- Make sure that the item is worn correctly. Equipment is more likely to be worn correctly if it is easy to use and/or wear.
- Consult with those workers and others who must wear the equipment when choosing the item(s). Where practical, consider worker’s individual characteristics and preferences for styles of equipment. (This should not, of course, result in the level of protection being reduced.) Involving the users of the equipment in the selection process should enhance user acceptance.
- Give preference to items of personal protective equipment, which comply with the relevant Australian Standard.

Wearing BVSC issued clothing

All employees will receive items of PPE as required on commencement. Employees shall at all times whilst wearing BVSC branded PPE, behave in a manner which positively reflects Council’s PLaCE based values and those included in the NSW Model Code of Conduct for Local Government; for example, employees shall not use language, actions, or other behaviour that could be considered detrimental to the reputation of Council.
All items of PPE must be worn in accordance with the manufacturer’s specifications and must not be altered or tampered with by any means.

**PPE Training**

Bega Valley Shire Council will educate and provide awareness training to all employees in the correct wearing of all appropriate PPE.

**Skin Protection**

All staff who are required to do any work for BVSC in an outdoor environment are entitled to be issued with sunscreen. Sun block SPF 30+ shall be applied to all areas of skin exposed to sunlight at the beginning of the work day and then reapplied every 2 hours until the completion of the day’s work. Additionally, staff can be provided with insect repellent. Both items are considered to be consumables and can be issued to staff at any time the store is open.

**Prescription eye protection**

All staff who wear prescription glasses and who are required to wear safety goggles or safety sun glasses at work may receive these items. The initial cost of safety goggles or safety sun glasses will be paid by BVSC provided a suitably qualified person endorses this requirement in writing and the employee purchases safety goggles or sun glasses which comply with all relevant Australian Standards. A suitably qualified person includes certified Optometrists and/or an Optical Dispenser.

Any member of staff making a request for prescription eye protection must first seek permission from the WHS team by completing a *Prescription safety eye wear request* form (Appendix A). This request will also need to be given to a suitably qualified Optometrist so he or she can recommend appropriate safety eye wear for the job/task completed by the employee. The Optometrist must also endorse the recommended eye wear using the same form before the item can purchased.

Staff will have two options for purchasing the approved eye wear:

1. The employee can purchase the eye wear themselves and then provide copies of the receipt to the WHS Officer, who will arrange the reimbursement of monies.
2. The employee can request to Optical Dispenser to send Council an invoice for the cost of the eye wear. In this instance the WHS Officer will arrange payment of the invoice.

*Notes*

- **It is the responsibility of the employee to first check that the dispenser is a registered creditor and if they are not, ensures they are added to the Authority System.**

- **The employee is required to pay for the optical consultation and all other associated costs.**

- **Council will only pay for the safety glasses/goggles. The safety goggles purchased should cost approximately $400 and safety sunglasses $500 - if the safety goggles/glasses cost more than those amounts the staff member will need to cover the gap cost for the more expensive item.**

**Workplace Signage**

Appropriate signage (which must display pictographic signs indicating the PPE/PPC to be worn) must be considered at all BVSC workplaces where PPE has been deemed to be worn. Signs should be posted in conspicuous locations wherever it is necessary to use personal protective equipment and reference made to this requirement during site inductions.
Compliance

Failure to comply with the directions given in this procedure may result in disciplinary action in accordance with Council’s procedure 5.02.1(a) *The Model Code of Conduct*, as well as procedure 5.04.10 and *Disciplinary Action*. 