



ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: *Clothing That Protects*

A lot depends upon the safety of your employees: what they do, the equipment and chemicals they work with or near, their coworkers, and the policies and procedures they follow. Add to this list the clothes they wear. Depending upon the tasks they perform, what they wear can mean the difference between going home the way they came in, and not going home at all.

Clothing can both protect employees from hazards and be the cause of hazards. For example, look at the cases where workers have gotten their sleeves caught in rollers, or electrical workers who were not wearing clothing made of flame-resistant fabric when a loose spark caused ignition. When this type of situation happens, it often leads to tragic results.

There are a number of factors employees should consider when choosing what clothing they will wear to work, especially if they work where there is a high potential for hazards. You may choose what PPE your employees must wear, but they can add to their level of protection by choosing their own clothing wisely.

Here are a few examples of occupations and some clothing elements to consider:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Welding | Dark clothing to reduce reflection under the face shield;
Clothing thick enough to prevent flash-through burns;
Trousers without pockets or cuffs that could catch stray sparks;
Long sleeves, no shorts. |
| Electrical | Clothing that has no metal fasteners;
No metal objects such as watches, rings, belt buckles. |
| Machinery | Clothing that is not loose fitting;
No jewelry;
Long hair tied back. |
| Construction | Clothing with appropriate protection from the sun and heat if working in hot climates,
Layered clothing for warmth in climates;
Clothing that does not restrict movement. |

Clothing selection can impact on employee safety, whether they work indoors or out. Working around machines of any kind generally requires one to dress with safety as a primary consideration. A typical dress code might prohibit loose-fitting clothes, jewelry, torn clothing, and shirts with long or baggy sleeves, shorts, dresses, or tank tops. Wearing dark clothing at night or in a dark environment can keep employees from being seen by others. This can lead to accidents involving moving equipment such as forklifts or other vehicles.

Poorly fitted clothing can also lead to slips, trips, or falls. For example, pants that are too long or shoelaces that won't stay tied can easily pave the way for a tumble down a set of stairs. Employees probably wouldn't wear heavy clothing if they're working in a hot climate, but coverage like long sleeves will protect them from the burning rays of the sun.

PROVIDED BY ASA-HOUSTON CHAPTER SAFETY COMMITTEE – NOVEMBER 2011

P.O. Box 924943 • Houston, Texas 77292 • 281.679.1877 • asahouston.org

American Subcontractors Association-Houston Chapter is a collective voice for a diverse membership committed to quality, safety, and ethics in construction. ASA-HC advocates for legislative reform and provides educational opportunities for the subcontracting community.