

# ***Extension Responds: Stress and Safety***

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## **Personal Protective Equipment prevents injuries**

By Mark Purschwitz

Early spring is the time to be sure you have the “personal protective equipment” (PPE) you will need for handling chemicals, operating machinery, making repairs, and other spring-time farming activities. When you, your family members, or your employees are ready to go, the PPE should be ready to go, too.

Personal protective equipment is required for many farm activities. It is important to purchase quality products that meet safety standards and are appropriate for the situation. It is equally important to purchase products that fit well and are as comfortable as possible. If the equipment is not comfortable, you or family members or employees are less likely to wear it.

### **PPE for chemicals**

Labels of crop-protection chemicals specify the types of PPE you will need. Generally, at a minimum, you should wear goggles and unlined chemical gloves when handling chemicals. You should use a chemical-resistant apron and face shield while mixing and loading. With some chemicals, you may need to wear some type of protective suit. You might need a respirator -- a dust/mist respirator for a dry chemical, or a cartridge-type respirator for filtering vapors. Remember to purchase replacements for disposable respirators or cartridges and keep them in a convenient place.

When applying anhydrous ammonia, you need unvented goggles (to prevent vapors as well as liquid from reaching the eyes) and heavy, lined chemical gloves that are resistant to the ammonia and insulated against the cold. The law requires anhydrous nurse tanks to carry a five-gallon reservoir of clean water, to flush eyes or skin in case of an exposure. Make sure it's there when you pick up the tank from your supplier. In addition, carry a small pocket-sized water bottle at on your person at all times. If you are exposed, you can use this water to begin flushing your eyes while you are going to the five-gallon reservoir.

### **PPE for other hazards**

You should wear eye protection while working in your shop or whenever there is a possibility that flying material could hit your face and injure your eyes. Use some kind of hearing protection while using open-station tractors or when using loud tools like chainsaws and grinders. There are many types and styles of eye and hearing protection available. Wear steel-toed shoes to protect your feet. Use sunscreen or wide-brimmed hats to protect your skin from burning and the long-term risk of developing skin cancer.

## **Where to purchase PPE**

It is important to purchase good quality products that fit well and do the job properly. Do not settle for anything less. Local farm supply or safety supply stores may have the PPE you need. Excellent catalog suppliers carry large selections of products and offer fast service. Two excellent catalogs are “Gempler’s” and “Lab Safety Supply.” Both of these catalogs are readily available with just a toll-free call. The Gempler’s “master catalog” is aimed at the agricultural market, while the Lab Safety “safety supplies catalog” is one of the largest in the nation and serves all industries. The phone number for Gempler’s is 800-382-8473. The number for Lab Safety Supply is 800-356-0783. (Note: Mention of these suppliers does not imply endorsement or imply superiority to other suppliers.)

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