

WHAT IF EMPLOYEES WON'T USE THE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) SUPPLIED?

Employers may use the 'four Es' to encourage employees to use PPE - educate, enable, engage and enforce. The first three are about giving employees the opportunity to participate in health and safety decisions. This provides an opportunity to develop the workplace relationship and for staff to see that they are valued and invested in. The best position is where staff want the desired option themselves.

- **Educate** employees about the hazards (eg. noise, dust, fumes, chemicals, heights), how the hazard can affect their health or safety, how PPE protects them against the hazard, and when to use PPE.
- **Enable** employees, that is, provide PPE that's suitable for the purpose and fits the person properly. Correct fit is important with all types of PPE. It's not a matter of 'one size fits all' and some styles have a more acceptable 'look'. Employees also need to be trained how to use the PPE correctly.
- **Engage** with employees. Are there issues or perceptions that lead to a reluctance to use PPE? Is PPE regarded as uncomfortable, cumbersome or restricting? If so, what can be done about it? People are more likely to use PPE if they've chosen it personally. Have they had a choice in the selection of their PPE? Is it considered uncool or not macho to use PPE? If so, where does this belief come from? Are management, supervisors and senior workers modelling good work practice to less experienced workers?

Finally, if all else fails, employers should **enforce**. By law, employers must provide PPE to protect employees against hazards that can't be controlled in any other way, and they must ensure that employees use it. Similarly, employees are required to use the PPE they are given. In other words, PPE is not an optional extra, and if an employee persistently refuses to use it, they leave the employer no option but to resort to disciplinary procedures. To remove any doubt over this matter, the use of PPE can be made a condition of the worker's employment, and is written into the employment agreement.