



---

Pulse Point Newsletter for March 2009  
Published by Alliance Consulting International  
Partners in Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety

---

### **MEXICO'S REVISED PERSONAL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT STANDARD NOM-017-STPS-2008.**

By Enrique Medina, MS, CIH

Mexico's Secretariat of Labor and Social Security (STPS in Spanish) published in the Official Journal of the Federation (similar to the U. S. Federal Register) on December 9, 2008 the revised Official Mexican Standard NOM-017-STPS-2008, "Personal Protection Equipment – Selection, use, and handling in the workplace". The new standard went into effect sixty days following its publication, on February 9, 2009.

Like the previous version, the objective of this standard is "to establish the minimum requirements for the employer to select, acquire, and provide to workers the corresponding personal protection equipment to protect them against the agents in the workplace that can cause harm to their physical integrity and health".

This standard contains the general instructions for the use, inspection, replacement, cleaning, limitations, maintenance, safekeeping, and final disposal of personal protection equipment (PPE).

Among the employer's main responsibilities, the new rule requires that the job hazard assessment performed to identify the appropriate PPE must be written and kept current, and, at a minimum, includes the following information:

- The type of activity performed by the worker,
- The type of job hazard identified,
- The anatomical region that needs to be protected,
- The job function,
- The required personal protection equipment.

If the risk assessment determined the need to use work clothes with protection features, they will also be considered PPE. Although the standard does not list them, some examples of this requirement would include disposable coveralls for contaminated sites, or Nomex clothing to wear for work during fire hazard conditions.

Based on the job hazard assessment, the employer must provide workers with PPE that attenuates the workers exposure to the hazardous agents; is for personal use; fits the physical characteristics of the workers, and includes instructions or procedures for use, inspection, replacement, cleaning, limitations, maintenance, safekeeping, and final disposal.

The employer must also communicate to workers the job hazards to which they are exposed by job function or area, based on the hazard assessment, and provide workers with training in the use, inspection, replacement, cleaning, limitations, maintenance, safekeeping, and final disposal of PPE.

The revised standard includes a new requirement to communicate to outside contractors the hazards and safety rules for the area where they will be working, and to ensure that contractors follow up with their workers about wearing their PPE and complying with the rule's conditions.

This requirement in effect makes the employer responsible for ensuring compliance with the standard on the part of all internal and external workers that are present at the facility, and consequently makes the employer jointly liable with the contractor for violations of the rule. It remains to be seen if this also makes the employer jointly responsible for work-related incidents, accidents, injuries and illnesses that contractor employees suffer from lacking or faulty PPE.

In the revised rule, the instructions for use, inspection, replacement, cleaning, limitations, maintenance, safekeeping, and final disposal of PPE are presented in greater detail and include instructions, such as:

- Inspecting PPE before, during and after use to ensure it continues to provide adequate protection,
- PPE must be for exclusive personal use when the worker is in contact with potentially infectious agents,
- Establishing a procedure for PPE decontamination or disinfection,
- Taking into consideration the materials, conditions, and devices needed for cleaning PPE in the workplace.

As in all the new and recently revised standards, NOM-017-STPS-2008 includes a procedure for evaluating compliance. This applies to both inspections conducted by the health and safety agency, as well as for those performed by third party verification units. The procedure consists of a list of the verification items subject to physical inspection or record review to evaluate compliance with the standard. This list can also serve as a self-audit tool to be used by facility health and safety personnel.

Among the changes in the new version was the obligation to verify that an accredited organization certify that the PPE complies with official standards, which became a non-mandatory recommendation contained in the Reference Guide attachment to the rule. This version also eliminates the requirement to obtain a compliance warranty from the PPE manufacturer or supplier when there is no certification body.

Appendix A of the previous rule that included the procedure and forms for conducting the job hazard assessment was deleted from the present standard, and was replaced by a non-mandatory Reference Guide. Table A-1 of the guide matches anatomical regions of the human body with PPE by the types of hazards involved. A new element of this table corresponds to risks from elevated work and confined spaces. Table A-2 is a format to list the job functions and mark the parts of the body subject to those hazards.

Notwithstanding the positive changes in the new version, the standard still fails to clearly specify the minimum type of PPE, such as safety glasses, hard hats, gloves, and safety shoes that the worker must wear in a particular job, or to provide criteria or specifications that can serve as a guide for the employer in selecting the most appropriate PPE for the hazard. Health and Safety managers and supervisors in Mexican facilities who prefer more specific guidance may wish to consult the PPE rules issued by United States OSHA found in 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart I, sections 1910.132 to 139.

If you have questions about this topic or other environmental, and health and safety issues, please contact us at (619) 297-1469 or send us an email at [emedina@pulse-point.com](mailto:emedina@pulse-point.com).

***PP***

Alliance Consulting International  
Partners in Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety  
3361 28th St.  
San Diego, California 92104  
(619)297-1469  
(fax (619)297-1023  
[emedina@pulse-point.com](mailto:emedina@pulse-point.com)  
[www.pulse-point.com/alliance](http://www.pulse-point.com/alliance)

For articles in previous issues of Pulse Point visit our web site's "archive" section at:  
[www.pulse-point.com/](http://www.pulse-point.com/)

-----  
To unsubscribe, just reply to this message and write "Unsubscribe" in the Subject bar.  
-----

All material Copyright © 2009 Pulse Point.  
Pulse Point is written for the benefit of our readers with the sole intent to provide general information. The articles are not intended as specific opinions or as a substitute for professional advice in individual cases.