

Workers' Comp

QUARTERLY

Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation

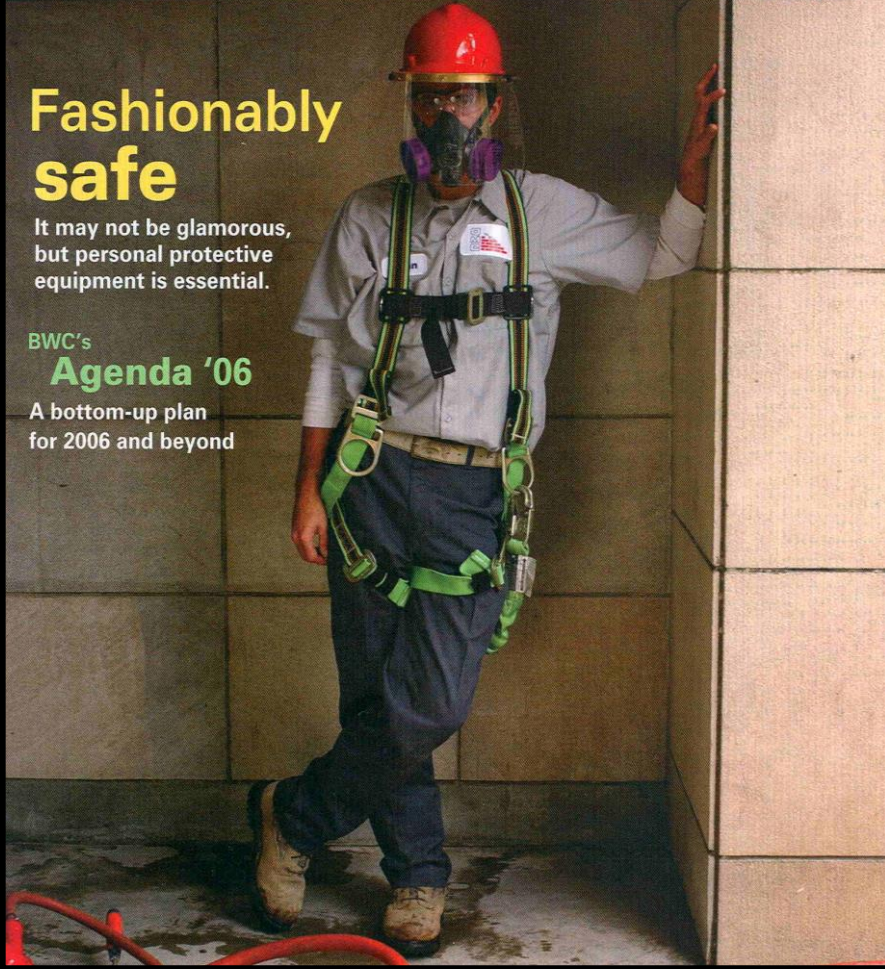
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Fashionably safe

It may not be glamorous, but personal protective equipment is essential.

BWC's Agenda '06

A bottom-up plan for 2006 and beyond

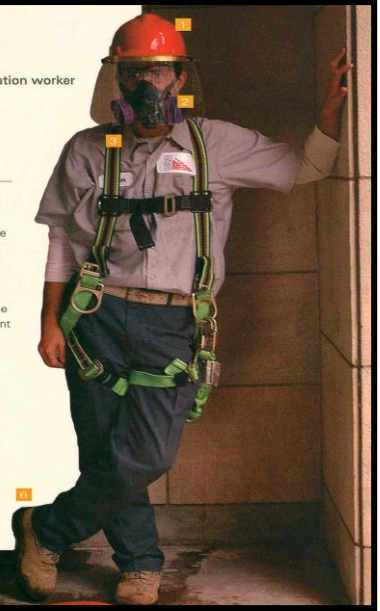


Masonry/building restoration worker

outfitted for safety

John Messmer is a masonry worker for Quality Masonry Co. Inc., based in Marion. The 30-employee company does masonry restoration projects throughout the state.

The photo shows some of the personal protective equipment typically worn by workers in the masonry/building restoration industry.



A \$10 pair of safety goggles could prevent a claim that could cost your company thousands of dollars, not to mention the incalculable impact on the injured worker's personal life.

It may not be glamorous, but personal protective equipment is essential

Fashionably safe

by Erik Harden

Like it or not, we live in a culture obsessed with what people wear. Thanks to *Madison* and *Sex in the City*, we're bombarded with red carpet coverage of the Oscars, Emmys and Grammys. And countless television makeover shows — *What Not to Wear*, *How Do I Look?*, *A Makeover Story*, just to name a few — gleefully transform real-life fashion victims into models of perfection. Basically, it's all fun and games, and nobody gets hurt — except maybe Blink, the singer whose critical acclaim for wearing a dress that looked like a dead swan draped around her neck at the 2000 Academy Awards.

Hurt feelings and bruised egos on the red carpet are one thing, but committing a faux pas with personal protective equipment (PPE) in the workplace can lead to serious suffering and tragedy. Safety equipment and protective clothing won't hand your employees on any best-dressed lists, but it can protect them from potential perils in the workplace. The most common forms of PPE can help prevent or lessen:

- Hearing damage/loss;
- Eye injuries or blindness;
- Respiratory problems;
- Head injuries;
- Burns, abrasions, cuts and contusions;
- Injuries from slips and falls.

U.S. Department of Labor statistics indicate an estimated 1,000 eye injuries alone occur in American workplaces each day. These injuries account for more than \$300 million in financial losses (medical expenses, lost production time and workers' compensation).

Administration estimates that using proper eye protection could prevent 90 percent of these injuries. Simply put, a \$10 pair of safety goggles could prevent a claim that could cost your company thousands of dollars, not to mention the incalculable impact on the injured worker's personal life.

Of course, your workers' safety is the primary concern when it comes to using appropriate protective equipment. However, you can also protect your company's financial well-being by investing in the proper equipment and clothing. Properly outfitting your employees can reduce the frequency and severity of workplace injuries which, in turn, can reduce workers' compensation premiums.

However, PPE is basically a last line of defense. A worker decked out in the proper clothing and equipment isn't totally safe from harm. Using PPE should not take the place of eliminating or controlling hazards at the source. You must still practice basic safety principles, such as hazard assessment, housekeeping and environmental controls.

In the end, protective equipment and clothing won't appear on the fashion runways of Milan and Paris, and Donna Karan's latest apparel line isn't likely to feature designer coveralls with coordinating safety goggles. No one will ever consider PPE hip-ree glasses, and it can prevent needless workplace injuries and, in some cases, fatalities.

Fernando Lamas, a 1990s-era actor and fashion maven caricatured on *Saturday Night Live* by Billy Crystal, was known to vainly state, "It's better to look good than to be good." However, when it comes to safety in the workplace, you should beg to differ.



The following pages illustrate how workers in three industries use personal protective equipment (PPE) in the workplace. Note: The photos do not show the workers performing specific job duties, and they do not depict every type of equipment workers should use. It is important to appropriately match PPE with the degree of hazard for various work tasks. If you'd like assistance with PPE in your workplace, call your local BWC customer service office or 1-800-QMBCWC, and listen to the options.

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Cover photo: John Messmer, a masonry worker for Quality Masonry Co. Inc., is pictured wearing some of the personal protective equipment typically worn by workers in the masonry/building restoration industry.

1 **Head/face protection** — A hard hat with a flow-down face shield can minimize injuries caused by impacts from heavy objects, while protecting the entire face from flying debris when sawing or grinding stone, brick, etc. In addition to the face shield, workers should wear safety glasses for eye protection.

2 **Respiratory equipment** — Masonry grinding and sawing can produce large amounts of dust that contains silica. To avoid inhaling this dust, workers wear cartridge respirators. Masonry workers typically wear respirators with high efficiency particulate air filters, which help trap dust and other particulates.

3 **Fall protection** — Because masonry/building restoration projects can take workers to great heights, it's imperative they use personal fall arrest systems. These systems generally consist of three elements: a lifeline harness, typically constructed of nylon, kevlar or other synthetic material; a shock-absorbing lanyard designed to take the strain out of a fall; and an anchorage point rated for 5,000 pounds (e.g., a beam, girder, vent pipe, etc.).

4 **Hearing protection** — No: shown on model — Sawing or grinding masonry, cut etc. can create high noise levels. Workers may use devices ranging from earplugs or earbuds to acoustic earmuffs, to protect from long-term impacts, to last noise.

5 **Hand protection** (not shown on model) — Workers may opt to wear work gloves made of material ranging from cowhide and heavy cotton to kevlar and other synthetics to protect hands from nicks, cuts and hot/cold extremes.

6 **Foot protection** — Commonly referred to as safety shoes, these shoes or boots usually have steel shanks with substantial soles to prevent punctures. They are also oil-resistant and many have a safety toe to protect against injuries.

In October of 2005, Quality Masonry Co. was contacted by the State of Ohio, Bureau of Worker's Compensation representative concerning an upcoming article in the BWC Quarterly Magazine. This magazine, sent to approximately 280,000 Ohio employers, was to focus on safety equipment for various professions. The BWC, familiar with QMC's equipment use and programs, felt that our participation was ideal. The resulting photo shoot in November 2005 involved the staff of the BWC, OSU and QMC, with publication of this article in the spring of 2006.