



# What's So Important About Work Gloves?

Insights

4.23.13

Work gloves are so ubiquitous that we may forget that gloves can present as many complex challenges as any type of PPE. The gloves selected may not address site-specific hazards, especially for a mobile workforce, such as construction. Not only does the texture and material affect performance, but so does the way in which the glove works with other PPE and clothing. Some employers find that changing gloves reduces a large number of the minor injuries and strains that plague their workers.

We encourage you to read the EHS Today Article, [Breaking Bad Habits \(or How To Establish a Chemical Resistant Glove Program\)](#). While on the EHS site, perhaps read, [Better Choices Improve Protection For The Construction Industry](#), and [Myth Busting: Six Things You Thought Wrong About Work Gloves](#).

Here's a teaser from David Shutt's article, with a [Breaking Bad](#) theme . . .

Even Hollywood is recognizing the importance of appropriate personal protective equipment in the workplace, even when that workplace is out of the ordinary. Are your employees protected from the sometimes hundreds of chemicals found in their workplace?

It warms my heart when Hollywood pays homage to the tireless efforts of us regular working folks, particularly those of us in industrial professions. I recently watched the first episode of "Breaking Bad," the highly acclaimed television show about high school chemistry teacher Walter White, who turns into a drug kingpin to secure a better financial future for his family after he is diagnosed with terminal lung cancer.

With his background in science and chemistry, there was no way Walter was going to start "cooking" meth without donning the proper personal protective equipment (PPE). ...

## What Is Reasonable Diligence In Selecting PPE?

By now, you may be wondering about your duty to make proper selections. A recent decision offers some general guidance. Basically, what degree of knowledge and past experience did you have about the work processes, the site,... ask, if I were OSHA, would I conclude that a reasonable company should have recognized these hazards? *"Did I act with reasonable diligence?"*

With respect to knowledge, the record lacks evidence that Smalis knew this employee was exposed to airborne lead in excess of ten times the PEL and, therefore, that his respirator was inadequate.

We find, however, that the company could have known of this violative condition with the exercise of reasonable diligence. See *Pride Oil Well Serv.*, ... finding constructive knowledge where employer “could have known of the condition with the exercise of reasonable diligence”; *Par Elec. Contractors, Inc.*, ... noting that reasonable diligence involves “a consideration of several factors,” including employer’s obligation to have adequate work rules and training programs, adequately supervise employees, anticipate employee exposure to hazards, and take measures to prevent violations).

Smalis admitted that lead levels at the worksite were “high,” and was specifically aware that lead levels in areas outside of the containment were high based on its prior experience in Allegheny County. Yet, the company failed to monitor this employee or otherwise monitor the levels of airborne lead topside to ensure the selection of an adequate respirator.

In these circumstances, we find Smalis failed to exercise reasonable diligence, and had constructive knowledge of its failure to provide this employee with an appropriate respirator.

Obviously, this discussion leads to consideration of whether you have updated realistic site-specific Job Safety Analysis (JSA), which determined the proper PPE. More on that topic another time!

Thanks,

Howard & the F&P Crew

### ***Related People***



**Howard A. Mavity**  
Partner  
404.240.4204  
Email

