TOTAL GROUP

SAFETY & EQUIPMENT GUIDE

Construction Safety Equipment Guide for Canadian Contractors

Practical equipment guidance for industrial teams.

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General information only. Confirm site-specific equipment decisions, applicable requirements, and manufacturer instructions before purchase or use.

Construction teams use safety equipment to help reduce exposure to hazards that remain after the work has been planned and higher-order controls have been considered. The right starting point is not a standard shopping list. It is the task, work area, equipment, materials, changing conditions, and the emergency arrangements that support the crew.

1 Key Takeaways

- Choose equipment for an identified task hazard, not simply because it is commonly used on another site.
- PPE supports hazard control; it does not remove a hazard or guarantee total protection.
- Fit, compatibility, inspection, care, training, and emergency access are part of a usable equipment decision.
- Fall protection, first aid, fire readiness, and atmospheric monitoring need to connect to the actual work plan.

2 Start with the work and hazards, not a product list

For Canadian contractors, equipment selection should follow a practical review of the scope, access, work practices, equipment, materials, environment, and people involved. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) describes PPE as equipment used to minimize exposure to specific hazards. It does not reduce the hazard itself, so elimination, substitution, engineering controls, and administrative controls should be considered before relying on PPE alone. CCOHS: Designing an Effective PPE Program

This approach avoids two common problems: buying protection that does not match the work, and treating a piece of equipment as a complete safety program. The selection should describe the residual exposure, the protection required, how equipment works with other controls, who will use it, and what must happen if conditions change.

3 PPE and workwear: match the protective function to the task

Construction work can combine several exposures in one shift. PPE and workwear decisions may involve head, eye and face, hearing, respiratory, hand, foot, and body protection. CCOHS recommends considering the degree of protection required, practicality for the task, fit, comfort, worker input, compatibility between items worn together, maintenance, and applicable requirements. CCOHS PPE guidance

Use PPE and workwear as a buying path only after the specific exposure has been identified. A garment, glove, boot, face shield, or respiratory product still needs to be checked against the actual hazard, manufacturer instructions, site process, and applicable requirements.

4 Fall protection and rescue: select the complete arrangement

Where the work assessment identifies a fall hazard, the equipment decision needs to include prevention and rescue readiness. A harness or connector on its own does not answer questions about access, anchorage, clearance, communications, trained roles, first aid, or recovery after an incident. CCOHS states that a working-at-heights rescue plan should be specific to the task, hazards, location, and likely rescue circumstances. CCOHS: Working at Heights Rescue Plan

Explore fall protection and rescue equipment when the work plan identifies its role. Confirm that rescue equipment is inspected, maintained, accessible, and supported by the site's actual rescue procedure before work begins.

5 Emergency, fire, and medical readiness should follow credible scenarios

Emergency equipment is most useful when it is selected through a site-specific vulnerability assessment. CCOHS identifies medical supplies, communications equipment, respirators, detection equipment, emergency protective clothing, fire-fighting equipment, rescue equipment, and trained personnel as examples of resources a plan may need to consider. The applicable requirements vary by workplace and jurisdiction. CCOHS: Emergency Planning

Use fire and emergency equipment to support the response resources identified for the site. Use medical and first-aid supplies within the first-aid assessment and response process. CCOHS notes that workplace first-aid needs depend on factors including the hazards, number of workers, and access to professional medical assistance. CCOHS: First Aid—General

6 Gas detection is an assessed-work requirement, not a universal add-on

Gas detection and atmospheric testing are relevant when the hazard assessment identifies potential toxic gases, flammable or explosive gases, or oxygen enrichment or deficiency. In confined-space work, CCOHS says testing may be needed before entry, during entry, or continuously, depending on

the hazards and risks. Equipment should be appropriate to the task, calibrated according to manufacturer instructions, and used by a qualified or competent person. Atmospheric testing is only one part of a confined-space entry program. CCOHS: Confined Space—Atmospheric Testing
Where an assessed atmospheric hazard exists, review gas detection and atmospheric-monitoring equipment alongside the complete work or entry program. A monitor does not by itself authorize entry or establish that an atmosphere is safe.

7 Make site-safety equipment part of the working layout

Site controls support the plan by making hazards, access routes, equipment locations, work areas, and emergency arrangements easier to manage. The practical questions are straightforward: Can people move through the area safely? Are emergency routes and resources accessible? Are traffic, storage, access, and work-zone controls maintained as the site changes?
Use site-safety equipment to support the controls identified for the active work area. Products should be selected for the location and task, then reviewed as work sequencing, equipment, materials, or access conditions change.

8 A practical selection check before ordering or issuing equipment

1. Describe the task, location, changing conditions, and people exposed.
2. Identify hazards and consider whether they can be eliminated, substituted, engineered out, or controlled administratively.
3. Define the residual exposure and the protection or emergency capability required.
4. Confirm fit, compatibility, practical use, inspection, care, storage, and manufacturer instructions.
5. Confirm the site's training, emergency response, communications, access, and review process.

9 Limits of this guide

This article provides general information for equipment discussions. It is not legal advice, a work procedure, a site assessment, a rescue plan, engineering advice, or a determination that a product or category is suitable for a specific task. Requirements vary by jurisdiction, client, site, and work activity. Confirm the applicable rules, current manufacturer instructions, and qualified safety input for the actual work.

10 Discuss construction equipment requirements with Total Group

Total Group can help your team frame a practical equipment discussion around the work, hazards, crew needs, and project requirements. Request information to discuss your requirements.

11 References

- CCOHS — Designing an Effective PPE Program
- CCOHS — Fall Protection: Working at Heights Rescue Plan
- CCOHS — Emergency Planning
- CCOHS — First Aid: General
- CCOHS — Confined Space: Atmospheric Testing