

PPE for Food Processing: A Guide to Food Safety PPE Selection

The food industry is one of the largest in the U.S., with meat and poultry plants **employing the largest percentage** (about a third) of food and beverage manufacturing employees in 2019. Keeping food industry workers safe is one of the most pressing concerns employers face.

Workers in food processing plants may be exposed to many potential hazards from cuts, falls, low temperatures, and more. Choosing the right PPE is a vital step in keeping food workers safe – and preventing contamination – so we put together this guide to PPE for food processing. Stauffer offers everything

you need to protect workers from these hazards, so we know firsthand what to look for when choosing PPE. If you're also looking for easy online ordering, customized safety solutions like prescription eyewear, and reporting and inventory management services, **Stauffer can help.**

Read on to learn more about the steps organizations take to keep consumers, workers, and food products safe, including what to look for when choosing the right PPE for food processing.



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What is the Importance of Using PPE for Food Processing?

[According to the CDC](#), an estimated 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) will get sick due to a foodborne pathogen or unknown agent. At the same time, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die each year of foodborne diseases. Possible contaminants include bacteria, viruses, parasites, and non-biologicals from the soil, machinery, during processing, and workers handling the food. The most common causes of food contamination by workers involve employees who come to work with a virus that goes airborne or bacteria spread from unclean hands. This presents a potential problem for not only consumers of the food, but also workers who can get sick from contamination and the food products themselves, spreading contamination further as they make their way down the supply chain.

Keep in mind that the emotional and financial impact of these potential

That's the importance of using PPE in food processing: protecting all human beings who interact with the food industry, including consumers and workers.

injuries should not be overlooked – workers may experience lost wages, emotional stress, job dissatisfaction, and physical pain resulting from workplace injury and illness.

Here are some of the potential negative repercussions that can happen to a food processing operation without the right food industry PPE protecting workers:

- Loss of productivity and inventory
- Added medical expenses and worker compensation
- Increased insurance costs
- OSHA-demanded changes to safety procedures
- A damaged company reputation and reduced consumer confidence

Instances of employee illness, injury and food contamination are greatly reduced with the right food industry PPE.

How to Choose the Right PPE for Food Processing



In an industry where so much work is done by hand, creating barriers between workers and product is critical. Much of the PPE required in these environments fall into one of these categories:

Liquid Protection

It's very common for slippery surfaces to occur in food processing, so extra care should be taken to help workers avoid slips and falls and maintain a safe grip on tools.

Within those categories, there are many types of PPE for food processing available to keep workers safe and protect the product from contamination. We advise our customers to choose the highest protection available, and to emphasize comfort to maximize productivity, offer employees a more pleasant work experience, and encourage compliance with PPE policies. When PPE is both comfortable and effective, workers are much more likely to use it regularly and correctly.

Thermal Protection

Temperature extremes are often involved in meat processing – keeping workers warm becomes extremely important for keeping them healthy and productive. When choosing thermal PPE, consider the specific tasks performed, the nature of the material, and how long workers will be in contact with the environment. How well PPE offers thermal protection is usually indicated by the type of material, its thickness, and its weight.

Cut Protection

Workers often work with heavy duty cutting machinery or individual knives, making cut protection one of the most important factors in PPE for food processing. When choosing cut resistance PPE for food processing, consider the type of objects being handled, how close workers are to cut hazards, and what kind of grip is needed for work done by hand. Gloves should be chosen carefully to provide dexterity and comfort in addition to protection, as this will contribute to worker safety as well as productivity.

Cut Resistant Gloves

Look for gloves that offer the highest cut protection while providing comfort and dexterity.

Aprons | Gowns | Thermal Workwear

Keep workers warm and dry, and help protect them from splashes and hazards of chemicals, grease, fats, and oils.

Sleeve Covers

Help workers keep their arms and sleeves clean while offering cut protection from blades.

Shoe and Boot Covers

Look for anti-skid covers ideal for wet environments.

Work Boots

Keep workers from slipping and falling and keep their feet warm, dry, and protected.

Hair Nets and Beard Covers

Look for lightweight and breathable covers to keep product safe from contamination.

Face Masks

Look for masks that offer a comfortable, breathable yet secure fit.

Food Processing Knives

Food Processing Tools

Look for cutlery and tools specifically designed for food processing so workers have safe and effective tools on hand.



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Considering how high the stakes are, it's important that you feel confident in the PPE for food processing you choose to protect workers and consumers. There are three main factors to consider when choosing the best food industry PPE:

Effectiveness

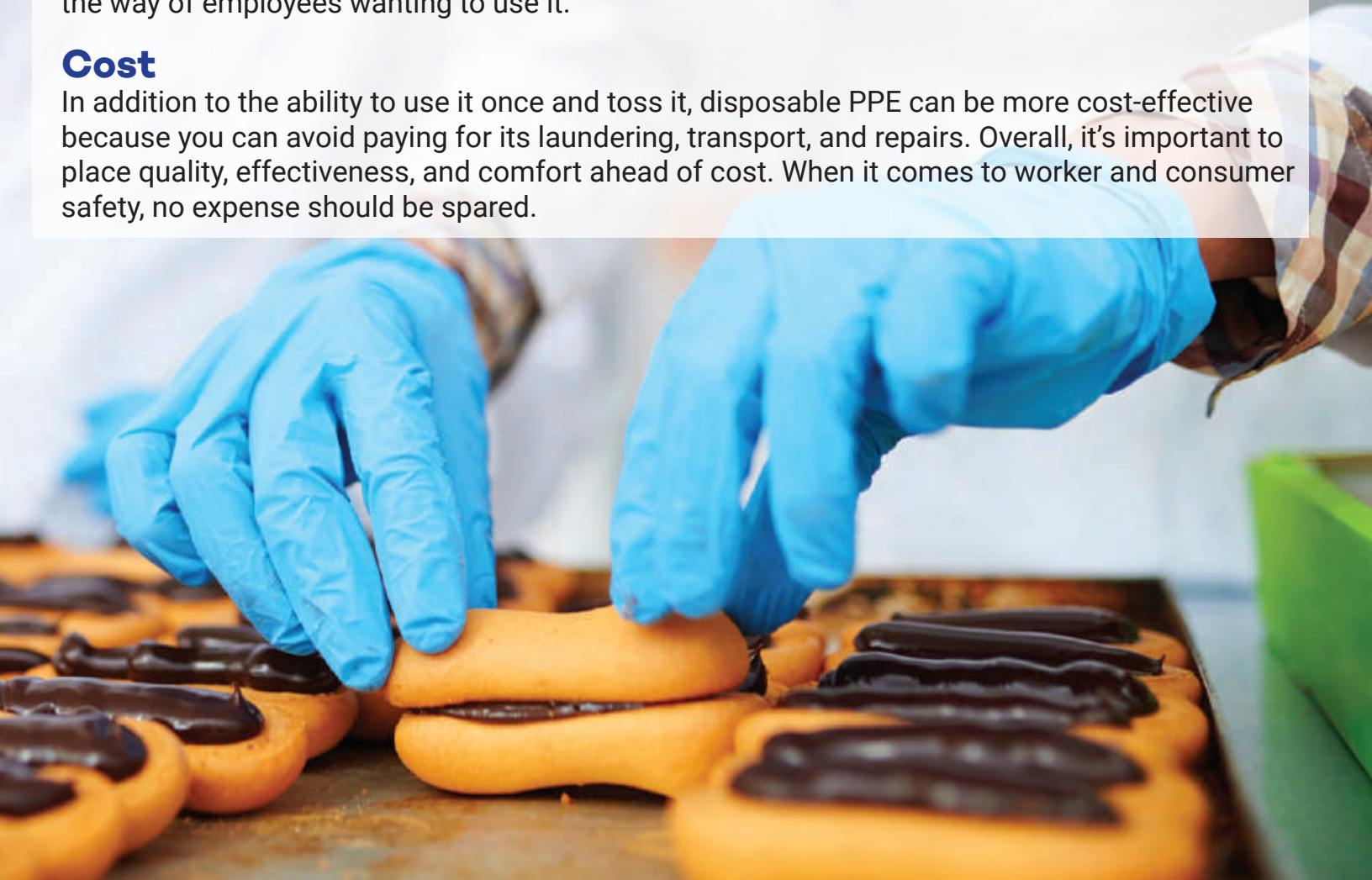
High-quality and tear-resistant PPE, whether disposable or reusable, is critical. In the food industry, disposable PPE is often preferred because its one-time-use nature can make it more effective in preventing the spread of contamination. For example, laundering fabric PPE can cause it to break down over time, decreasing its effectiveness and increasing the risk of breakages, holes, or rips.

Comfort

If PPE for food processing isn't comfortable, interrupts a worker's ability to do their job correctly, or feels restrictive, they are more likely to go without the PPE or modify it in a way that reduces its effectiveness. Look for PPE that keeps up with the latest fabrics to offer lightweight, breathable, and high-quality protection against chemicals, burns, cuts, and other hazards. PPE should be part of any food industry worker's daily routine – avoid any PPE that gets in the way of employees wanting to use it.

Cost

In addition to the ability to use it once and toss it, disposable PPE can be more cost-effective because you can avoid paying for its laundering, transport, and repairs. Overall, it's important to place quality, effectiveness, and comfort ahead of cost. When it comes to worker and consumer safety, no expense should be spared.





Proper Training with PPE for Food Processing Reduces Injury Risks

Proper training is an integral part of providing proper PPE for food processing. Workers should fully understand the purpose and importance of safety. With customized programs and services to meet the specific needs of your business, Stauffer can be your resident expert in Food Processing PPE. Safety is the specialty of our team of dedicated account managers, and our experts can provide on-site training and support to ensure compliance and proper usage. [Contact us](#) to learn more about our training options.

Stauffer has a Wide Selection of PPE for Food Processing

Those working in the food industry may encounter a variety of hazards, from wet, slippery floors to sharp blades and harsh cleaning chemicals. Stauffer carries all the solutions for these hazards. In addition, our e-commerce platform offers contract pricing, real-time inventory, and easy online ordering. Plus, we customize safety to fit your needs, including custom prescription eyewear, with reporting and inventory management to help identify cost and inventory optimization opportunities. [Click here](#) to shop Stauffer PPE for food processing.

