

WORK ATTIRE BEST PRACTICES

Many highly skilled employees are required to wear long pants including Police Officers, Public Works, Parks & Recreation, and Utility Crews. Long pants provide several safety benefits in the workplace and during recreation and various other activities.

Ultimately, the decision on appropriate work clothing standards and personal protective equipment (PPE) must be locally determined by the employer, based on management's assessment of the hazards, also known as a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA). This is part of the JHA process which focuses on job tasks as a way to identify hazards before they occur. It focuses on the relationship between the worker, the task, the tools, and the work environment.

The employer should review equipment owner's manuals that may provide manufacturer's recommendations for the type of protective clothing to be worn when operating the equipment. This information can be utilized by regulatory agencies such as NJ PEOSH to enforce the General Duty Clause, which states that employers "shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees".

In general, the Safety Director is a proponent of long pants on the job, for the following reasons:

Machinery

Anyone working with machinery will be safer if they wear long pants. Machinery can include anything from a lawn mower to a heavy-duty welder; drills, grinders, and saws; construction site equipment, and material transmission equipment, such as pumps and augers. Long pants will better protect your legs from being injured by the tools and equipment since they add a layer of protection over your exposed skin.

Bites, Stings, and Poison Ivy

Long pants protect against bites and stings from insects and venomous creatures. Long pants also provide a layer of protection over the legs that may help the wearer avoid contact with poisonous plants, such as Poison Ivy. One of the biggest threats that can be minimized by wearing long pants is tick-related diseases. Ticks carry many diseases, including Lyme disease, but they cannot bite through your pants. Long pants also deter mosquitoes, which may carry the West Nile virus and venomous bites or stings from snakes and scorpions.

Hazardous Materials

Anyone working in hazardous environments, such as cleaning up a hazardous material spill, should wear long pants. Even if the environment does not have obvious dangers like a hazardous material spill, it can still be dangerous. Examples include cleaning up after a flood or other natural disaster or rooting through the remains of a sewer backup. Long pants protect the skin from chemical exposure as well as injury from wayward splashes, pipes, boards, nails, and other sharp objects.

Sun Exposure

Long pants protect against the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. Even if the temperatures are sizzling you will be safer wearing long pants if you are going to be in bright sunlight for extended periods. The ill effects of UV radiation run the gamut from wrinkles to potential skin cancer.

Remember that local management is ultimately responsible for putting in place any protective measures, and these must reflect the need for protection from exposure; especially where those hazards can readily be identified. Decisions regarding proper work attire and requirements for personal protective equipment must be based on equipment manufacturer recommendations, hazard assessments, and sound judgment.