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***PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT ALLOWANCE***

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**NOTICE:** This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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## ***Southern Region Personal Protective Equipment Allowance***

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### 1. Introduction.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is intended to protect employees from high risk workplace hazards that cannot be mitigated with re-engineering, work practice changes and/or administrative controls.

Some PPE items are usable only by a single person for example Safety Shoes while performing work in the workplace. Such an item is considered personal apparel, which in general is restricted from purchase by Federal Appropriations Law.

GAO decision B-123223 states that, "Clothing is a personal expense and every employee of the Government is required to present themselves for duty properly attired according to the requirements of his/her position". However, 5 U.S.C. §7903 allows appropriated funds to be used for purchase of "special clothing and equipment" in special cases for the protection of personnel in the performance of assigned tasks. In order to purchase special clothing and equipment, the following three criteria must be met:

- The clothing or equipment must be "special" or "necessary" as opposed to an item the employee may reasonably be expected to provide for himself/herself.
- The item must be for the benefit of the Government.
- The employee must be engaged in hazardous duty, or performing an activity that requires specified safety gear, or uniform requirement.

Approval of personal apparel purchases with public funds is contingent on:

- How often the employee performs the task
- Whether the work requirement can be postponed
- If employee has extended exposure to the hazardous environment
- If employee is required to work on energized circuitry

## 2. Eligibility.

Safety Shoes (boots) are authorized for the following personnel in Southern Region:

- Facilities Engineering Technicians (FET)
- Regional Maintenance Specialists (RMS)
- Electronics Systems Analysts (ESA)
- Electronic Technicians (ET)
- Staff who handle gas cylinders or containers weighing 25lbs or more (e.g. HMT, DAPM, OPL)
- Other staff as approved by Regional Safety Program Manager

*NOTE: EHB-15 STATES; Protective footwear shall meet the requirements of ANSI z41-1991, however it is not likely that one shoe will completely meet all aspects of the standard. Southern Region recommends purchase of protective footwear that meets the non-conductive and toe protection aspects of the standard. Shoe manufacturers clearly specify the aspects of the ANSI standard met by their product.*

Additional PPE as required is determined through ***Occupational Safety and Health Manual NWSM 50-1115 Procedure 8 – Personal Protective Equipment*** and through the development of job hazard analysis <https://sites.google.com/a/noaa.gov/nws-sr-efb/safety-environmental>

## 3. Responsibilities

**Employee:** The employee is responsible for care and custody of all Government furnished personal protective equipment. Employees must report to their supervisor any defective PPE or observed working conditions that may require additional PPE. Employees requiring customized PPE must coordinate and obtain authorization from their Supervisor and the NOAA Workforce Management reasonable accommodation program prior to acquisition of the PPE.

**Supervisor:** The supervisor will ensure prior to the start of the work that employees have received proper training and have the required Personal Protective Equipment available for use.

## 4. Procurement Process

Southern Region allows for a maximum reimbursement up to \$200 every two years, however exceptions due to wear and tear may be made on a case by case basis. General use items (i.e. *Safety Boots*) will be funded under the employee's home portfolio and the FHB safety equipment task code. No other special items such as sole inserts will be considered. Consumable safety items purchased (i.e. Earplugs) for specific program support will be funded by the supported program.

All personnel using PPE items, including safety shoes must submit a request containing adequate justification and be pre-approved prior to purchase. The request must contain adequate justification to be approved including the date of the last purchase. Staff must submit a completed NOAA 36-30 Special Clothing and Equipment Purchase Authorization form and NOAA 36-31 Purchase Card Transaction Authorization to the Regional Safety Program Manager for review and approval. The approved document should be attached to the bankcard statement and kept for documentation.

Personal items purchased with public funds remain the property of the government and are to be used only for official work carried out in the workplace. The items are not for use outside of the workplace and should be kept at the worksite ready for use.

If an employee requires custom orthotics for use with a safety shoe this is treated as a Reasonable Accommodation. Appropriate paperwork must be filed and approved prior to SR authorizing use of government funds.

## 5. Conclusion

The Personal Protective Equipment Allowance represents a good faith measure by the NWS Southern Region; however, employees must recognize the primary responsibility for their safety lies within themselves – their knowledge, awareness, preparedness, and the choices and decisions they make. Employees should address any questions concerning proper dress and precautions in their work environments to their immediate supervisor.

